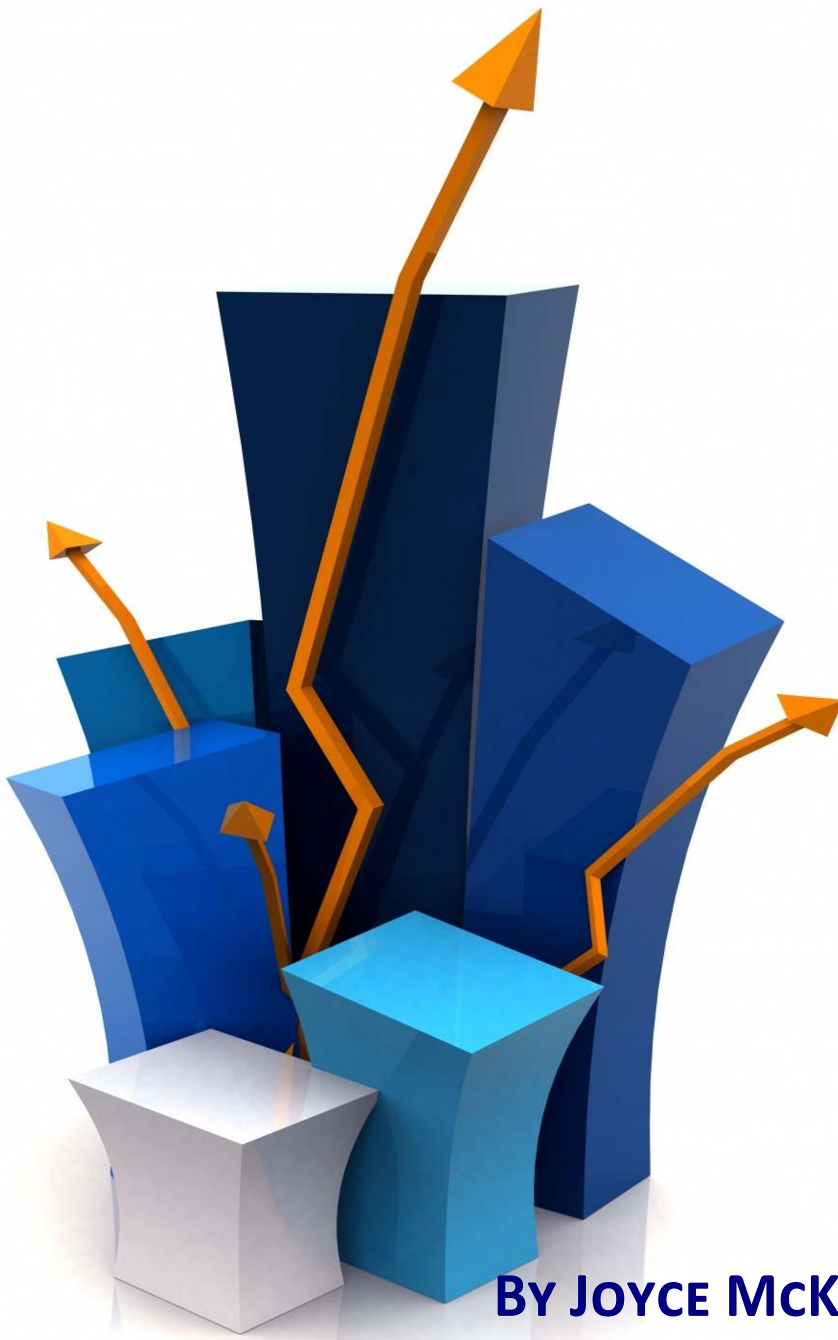
The Secret To Achieving Brilliant Returns At Your Next Event: A Guide to Maximizing Your ROI and ROO



2010 Edition

By Joyce McKee

Let's Talk Trade Shows

www.letstalktradeshows.com

INTRODUCTION

IN LIFE THERE ARE MANY "SECRETS" – THOSE THINGS HIDDEN, UNSEEN, UNRECOGNIZED, OR NOT COMMONLY KNOWN AND UNDERSTOOD, EXCEPT BY THE INITIATED AND FEW.

> This e-book, *The Secret to Achieving Brilliant Returns at Your Next Event: A Guide for Maximizing ROI and ROO*, was written to unlock the mysteries of profitability in the highly specialized arena called event marketing. By giving you the underlying principles and basic tools you will need to compete, not only effectively, but elegantly, your understanding will drive better decision making all along the way.

In a September 2010 blog post, Chris Brogan, the bestselling author of the book *Trust Agents* writes:

> Almost every time I use the word "secret" when writing a blog post, I really mean "common sense that most people don't do."

And that is exactly my definition of events "secrets." This eBook is full of material when used can create a brilliant event with a high rate of return.

Is there a duplicable formula for producing your best possible events and returns? What is the "secret sauce" for creating great events? It's a proven recipe that can be shared with everyone.

THE FORMULA FOR EVENT SUCCESS

1. Choose the right show that fits with your overall marketing strategy.
2. Plan for all the phases of the show.
3. Execute flawlessly.
4. Follow up with everyone who visited your booth.
5. Determine the ROI of the event.

Knowing these steps, the basics, you can learn how to turn them into points of brilliance and have the returns you anticipated. The chapters of this e-book will guide you through all five steps and beyond.

Event marketing offers a unique opportunity that, if understood correctly and capitalized on, can propel higher and higher increases in both ROI and ROO. Yet the aisles of a show are filled with companies who have no idea of these secrets and, as a result, their performance suffers. Select companies, who do know these secrets, have always enjoyed the most successful events for themselves and their customers.

Now you can take something ordinary and make it exceptional, too.

2010 Edition Sponsors

This eBook has been underwritten by eight sponsors who wanted to bring this new information to you. The Sponsors will have an ad in the eBook in the appropriate chapter. The Sponsors are:

- 4imprint
- Alliance Tech
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- Event Technologies
- GetSynchronicity
- PRMconnect
- Skyline Exhibits
- The Trade Show Coach

In writing this eBook I draw from my own experiences in face-to-face marketing consulting. Those consulting assignments were for exhibitors, show organizers and official service contractors. Then I have augmented my material with other authors and their works. So the eBook is a compilation of the very best our industry has to offer.

Updates to the eBook

On a quarterly basis, updates will be sent to those who have downloaded this eBook. Certain aspect of the event industry are changing rapidly, these updates will help you grasp the impact of some of the changes so you can take advantage of them.

Please note – this eBook does not discuss international events. That eBook will be produced in 2011.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me –
email: joycemckee@letstalktradeshows.com

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Chapter One: Industry Research – What is it Telling us about the Viability of Trade Shows and Events - Today?

Questions are always posed regarding the value and worth of the trade show and event function within a corporation. Often senior management asks the head of marketing to justify one or more marketing activities. So where can they turn to arm themselves with solid facts and figures? It is the intent of this chapter to provide you with the necessary information to justify event participation.

The trade show industry is fortunate to have several organizations who keep their fingers on the pulse of our industry. Two prominent research-based exhibition industry associations that will help answer the question above are The Center for Exhibition Industry Research [www.ceir.org] and Exhibit Surveys [www.exhibitsurveys.com].

For decades, these two organizations, along with many others (some of which will be mentioned later) have given us insights and statistics which have helped us understand this valuable marketing tool that we call event marketing.

The State of the Exhibition Industry

CEIR[1] has consistently reported on the exhibition industry via the *CEIR Index* since its conception in 2000. Here is a description of the *CEIR Index* from the forward to the 2010 iteration:

> *The 2010 CEIR Index provides exhibition industry performance from 2000 to 2009 across 11 key industry sectors. More than 300 events contributed data for this report, and the number of submissions from these business-to-business exhibitions grows each year. The CEIR Index is an extension of the CEIR Exhibition Industry Census (CEIR Census), which was originally conducted in 2000 and repeated in 2005.*
>
> *Because the CEIR Census does not provide any performance indicators or predictive values for the exhibition industry, the CEIR Index was launched in 2004 to fill this very wide gap. Now in its seventh iteration, the CEIR Index is truly the exhibition industry's tool for measuring performance.*

In its summary of 2009, the *CEIR Index* reported:

> *The Great Recession of 2008 and 2009 has been described as the most significant economic downturn since the Great Depression that began in*

[1] CEIR (www.ceir.org) of Dallas, Texas, is a nonprofit organization that represents the entire exhibition industry. Founded in 1978 as the Trade Show Bureau, CEIR's mission is to generate research and communications programs that promote the value and benefits of exhibitions as a primary component in a company's integrated marketing communications program. CEIR is a leading source of research, information and communications regarding exhibitions.

> *1929. Although the exhibition industry as we know it today did not exist some 80 years ago in the United States, it is hard to imagine that it would have experienced worse declines than those of the past two years.*
>
> *Prior to last year, the largest single year decline ever recorded by the U. S. exhibition industry was 3.1%... and that was in 2008. The 12.5% decline recorded in 2009… is four times greater than the downturn the industry experienced in 2008. The 2009 CEIR Index, which reported on the 2008 outcome, predicted that the industry would not grow until well into 2010.*

A copy of the 25 page CEIR Index Executive Summary can be found here. In addition, Richard Mead, Managing Director, The Jordan, Edmiston Group has produced a report titled, *JEGI's Update on the US B2B Exhibition Industry* which can be viewed here.

THE OXFORD ECONOMICS STUDY

In September of 2009 a study was released titled: *The Return on Investment of US Business Travel* Prepared by Oxford Economics USA. The US Travel Association and Destination & Travel Foundation sponsored this critically important study.

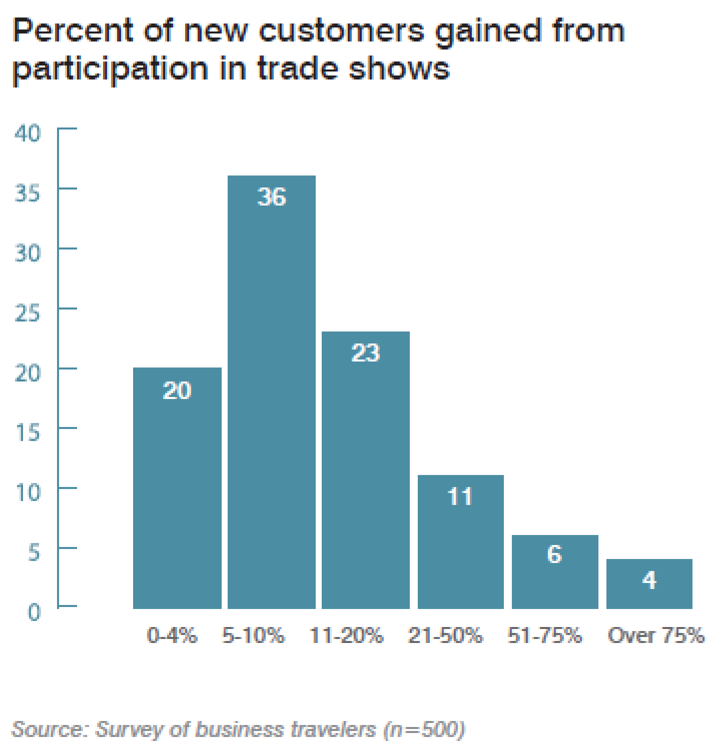
Within the overall study trade shows and their impact is discussed. For the purposes of this document, I am highlighting only those portions of their research. The Executive Summary of this report can be found via this link.

In the opening remarks of the Executive Summary the report states:

> Business travel is under scrutiny. Corporations, responding to weakening profits, have targeted travel as an immediate candidate for cost savings. In addition, meetings and incentive travel have been recently maligned in public forums as excessive. Perhaps more than at any other time in recent history, business travel is being evaluated from all sides.
>
> To be useful, this evaluation should center on a fundamental business question: what is the relationship of business travel to company performance? Of course business travel generates significant economic value through its direct injections into the transport, hospitality, and other service sectors. This is not to be ignored. But the real value of business travel relates to its impact on individual company performance and, by extension, the performance of the U.S. economy. This study seeks to define exactly this.

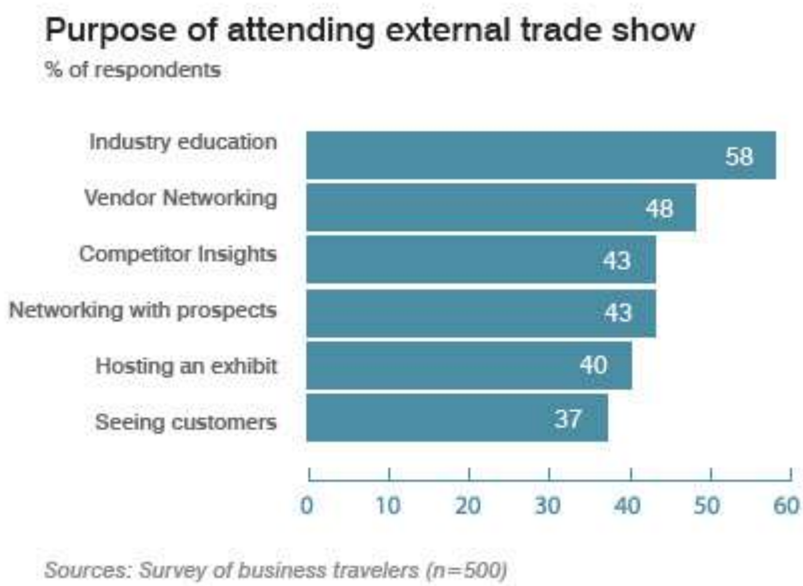
There are a couple of trade show statistics which are worthy to note in this report. A significant finding is that the relationship between business sales and trade show participation is particularly strong.

- More than half of business travelers stated that 5-20% of their company's new customers were the result of trade show participation.



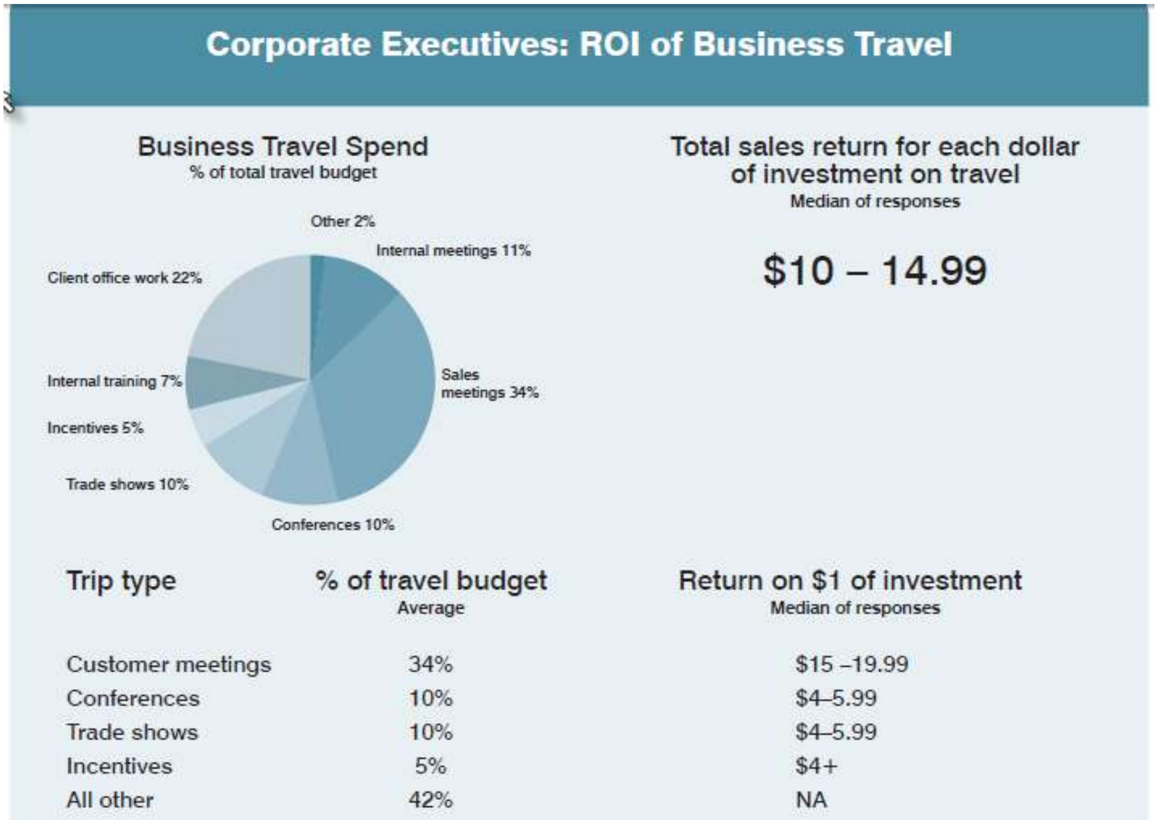
PURPOSE OF ATTENDING A TRADE SHOW

Normally there are many reasons for attending a trade show. In this study, the leading response was "industry education" followed by "vendor networking". These two factors have long been primary reasons for attending shows. It is nice to have these statistics to back up assumptions.



CALCULATING A RETURN ON TRADE SHOWS

As represented in the chart below, trade shows have a return on investment of $4.00 – 5.99. One could use these figures to calculate the individual return on a specific show or the entire calendar of shows.



Trip type	% of travel budget Average	Return on $1 of investment Median of responses
Customer meetings	34%	$15 –19.99
Conferences	10%	$4–5.99
Trade shows	10%	$4–5.99
Incentives	5%	$4+
All other	42%	NA

Additional; information about this study can be obtained here.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2010

CEIR recently shared that data collected for the annual *CEIR Index* report for the first quarter of 2010 reveals that the trade show industry experienced an overall decline of 4.0 percent when compared to the same quarter of 2009.

However, this decline is much smaller compared to the 11.6 percent decline between the first quarter 2008 and the first quarter of 2009. Although all four metrics measured by the *Index* (attendees, exhibitors, net square feet and revenue) still experienced declines, those drops were not as severe in comparison to the same quarter in 2009. According to the *Index*, slow but certain industry growth will continue through 2010.

So what does this mean for us who are exhibiting? That exhibitions are down, but far from out. Skip Cox, CEO and President of Exhibit Surveys aptly summarized the industry's woes in his 2009 White Paper, *Looking Past the Recession: Exhibition Strategies for the Interim* [www.exhibitsurveys.com]. His synopsis:

> *Exhibitions are down, but far from out. Real time findings from the current recession indicate cause for optimism, including sustained audience quality levels. Also, even though exhibitor budgets are down and will likely trail the recovery, the perceived value of exhibitions as a marketing tool not only remains intact but is enhanced in terms of its role within the vogue of "experiential marketing." While discernment of the depth, duration, and breadth of this recession is still difficult, metrics that track the health of the industry and the economy show hints of a turnaround that may begin late this year. In the meantime there are strategic moves the industry can employ, particularly in terms of its key constituencies, as it rides out the storm so it may exploit the coming recovery period from a position of strength.*

Finally, consider another well-known marketing tool and its performance of late. Advertising had a 12.3% decline last year as reported by B to B Magazine. Clearly, in times of financial woe, marketing dollars may be the first to dissipate. However, as the economy rebounds, marketing will quickly regain its importance. The savvy marketer, for the many reasons outlined throughout this book, will choose exhibitions as his preferred marketing tool.

EXHIBIT SURVEYS AND THEIR ANNUAL RESEARCH

The *Exhibitor Magazine in* the April 2010 edition has an annual review of statistics from Exhibit Surveys. This year's article title is: Survey Says. The full article can be found on the *Exhibitor Magazine* site. They begin the article by stating:

> Each year, the exhibit- and event-research firm polls attendees from more than 40 U.S. trade shows to determine the effectiveness of exhibit marketing and identify industry benchmarks. The company's 2009 Trade Show Trends report includes valuable information about exhibit performance, show-floor traffic, and trade show attendees — their buying power, purchase plans, and attendance habits — all broken down into four industry sectors: high tech, retail, medical, and manufacturing/industrial.

Below are a few statistics that you can use.

Net Buying Influences

While some attendees simply come for the swag, the vast majority — about 80 percent on average — have the power to recommend or make final purchasing decisions. All sectors experienced an increased NBI in 2009, except trade shows in the medical sector, which experienced a 6-percent decrease.

All Shows	**80%**
High Tech	**81%**
Retail	**85%**
Medical	**71%**
Manufacturing/Industrial	**83%**

80%

Exhibit-Staff Performance

When asked to rate the performance of exhibit staff, 91 percent of attendees described staffers as good, very good, or excellent — a figure that has remained almost identical for the past several years.

Total Buying Plans

Unfortunately for exhibitors, decision-making power and the intent to purchase do not always go hand in hand. Total buying plans — the percentage of attendees who plan to buy within 12 months of a show — experienced an expected dip in 2009. While the all-show average has historically remained consistent since 2002 (fluctuating from a low of 52 percent in 2006 and 2008 to a high of 55 percent in 2004 and 2007) this year's average landed at a mere 47 percent. However, that number is likely a reflection of the economic recession and not a decline in the effectiveness or potential of exhibit marketing. Shows in the retail sector were the hardest hit, falling from an average TBP of 67 percent in 2008 to just 50 percent in 2009.

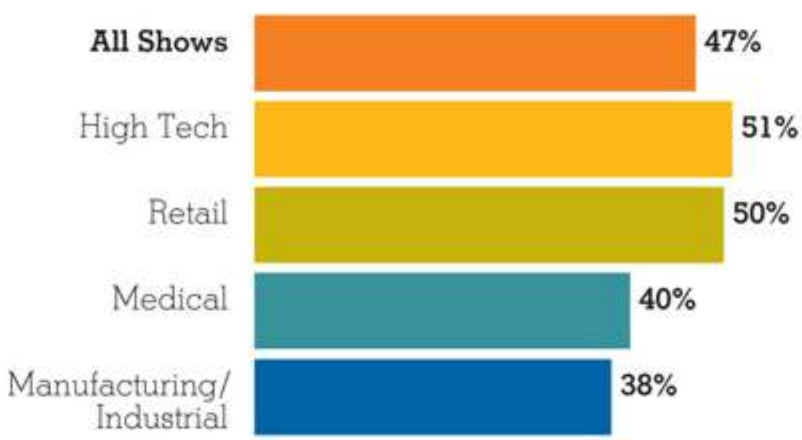


Exhibit Surveys has a wealth of information we can use to help our internal management better understand the significance of the trade show marketing function.

INDUSTRY STRIDES IN 2010

September's issue of T*radeshow Executive* notes the strides the industry is making. Below is a portion of the article from their website:

> **Trade Show Strength Gaining Momentum? TSE Dashboard Reveals Back-to-Back Increases in Exhibit Space and Attendance.** *Oceanside, CA* – The size of the crowd and the show floor at trade shows grew for the second consecutive month in July, a welcome sign that exhibitions were making some steady headway out of the recession. The *Trade Show Executive (TSE) Dashboard of Monthly Trade Show Metrics*, which will be released September 1, found that trade shows grew 3.8% in net square footage (nsf) and 9.2% in attendance in July when compared to the same time last year. The number of exhibitors remained relatively flat, suffering only a slight decline of (0.3)%, which did not particularly detract from the evidence of growing strength in the market.
>
> The numbers continued the positive trend found in last month's *Dashboard* of shows held in June, which posted across-the-board increases of 2% to 3%.
>
> The adjusted total nsf for 23 shows held this July was 1,625,341, up from 1,566,000 nsf a year ago. The adjusted average exhibit area also increased to 73,879 nsf per event compared to 71,182 nsf in 2009.
>
> One show not figured into the adjusted figures was the outlier *SIGGRAPH*, which appeared to have benefited tremendously by moving to Los Angeles. Hall-Erickson, Inc. said the closer proximity to its attendee pool of computer graphics and 3D technology executives contributed to a 105% jump in attendance to 22,539. That compared to approximately 11,000 attendees at last year's show in New Orleans. Exhibit space for the 2010 show was also up 16.0% to 46,500 nsf, while the number of exhibitors grew 22.4%.
>
> Impressive gains in all three metrics were also reported at the largest show in the July *Dashboard*. The *IFT Annual Meeting + Food Expo (IFT2010*), organized by the Institute of Food Technologists, reported a 47.8% jump in attendance over *IFT2009* in Anaheim, a 28.6% increase in exhibitors and a 32.2% gain in exhibit space to 233,000 nsf. *IFT2010* was held in Chicago, which is also closer to its attendee pool, the food processing industry.

Provided is one highlight from an exhibition industry leader from *TSE's* "Dashboard:"

"Our results in the first half of 2010 provide us with optimism for the second half of the year. In the First Quarter, attendance at our events was up by 9% and we saw an increase in our exhibitor participation, both in number of companies and in net square footage.

"Based on those metrics, we remain optimistic because we are tracking ahead of our targets for the second half. We continue to remain focused on staying close to our customers – particularly attendees. We have expanded our VIP attendee programs and continue our very granular attendee marketing focus. Our most recent success with that approach was the National Hardware Show®, seeing a 20% increase in attendance and a 10% increase in verification.

"Our optimism remains anchored in objective barometers such as increased exhibitor satisfaction and attendee satisfaction scores. Recent events such as INTERPHEX and International Vision Expo East scored substantially higher than they have in recent years." –Nancy Walsh, EVP, Reed Exhibitions

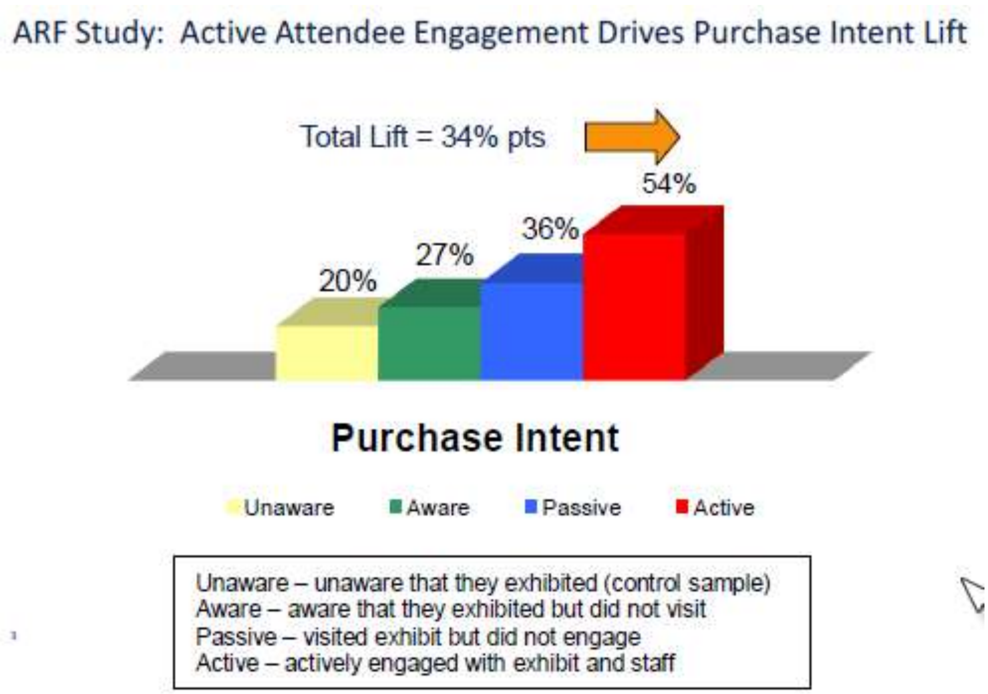
Tradeshow Executive reports on the shifts and changes within the trade show industry. You can keep up on the monthly activities by viewing their online edition at:

www.tradeshowexecutive.com.

WHY EXHIBITIONS WORK IN ANY ECONOMIC CLIMATE

Exhibit Surveys' 2010 White Paper*, Exhibitions Must Deliver (even more) Value to Exhibitors in the Post-recession World,* showcases an important statistic from the Advertising Research Foundation. It states:

There is plenty of research and evidence to support that participating in exhibitions accelerates the sales process, and some of the more sophisticated exhibitors are doing this on their own. One such research project we have reported on in past white papers is the study titled "Experiential Marketing: A Master of Engagement - Research on How Engaging Events Pay". This research conducted for the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) by Exhibit Surveys and Gallup & Robinson proves that face-to-face engagement truly and effectively drives exhibitor results. It drives the brand metrics that in turn drive purchase intent, and purchase intent has proven in turn to be a good predictor of actual sales.



2010 EXHIBIT SURVEYS, INC. Page 8 A White Paper by Exhibit Surveys, Inc. 3 Purchase Intent 20% 27% 36% 54% Unaware Aware Passive Active Total Lift = 34% pts. ARF Study: Active Attendee Engagement Drives Purchase Intent Lift

"Active" engagement is defined as the meaningful face–to–face interaction that takes place in the exhibit. The higher the level of engagement, the better the results. This graph illustrates the impact of exhibit engagement on Purchase Intent, a key metric of success because of its high correlation with actual sales, but similar increases were evident for all key brand metrics tested (e.g., awareness, consideration, brand fit, etc.).

From a consultative standpoint, the most urgent issue, and one that is easily addressed with data, is to educate and then convince your key exhibitor clients in the simple necessity of adequate booth staffing. Staff resources are often as scarce as budget to invest in shows, but the lost opportunities of not staffing adequately and effectively are very significant in terms of the negative impact on ROI.

A disturbing trend we are seeing is that although exhibitors continue to do a good job of attracting their potential audience to the exhibit, the degree of face- to-face engagement is declining often because of fewer staff resources. In 2009, for every 100 qualified attendees (those in the target audience) who visited the average exhibit, only 53 were engaged *face-to-face by someone in the exhibit. There has been a steady decline in this metric.*

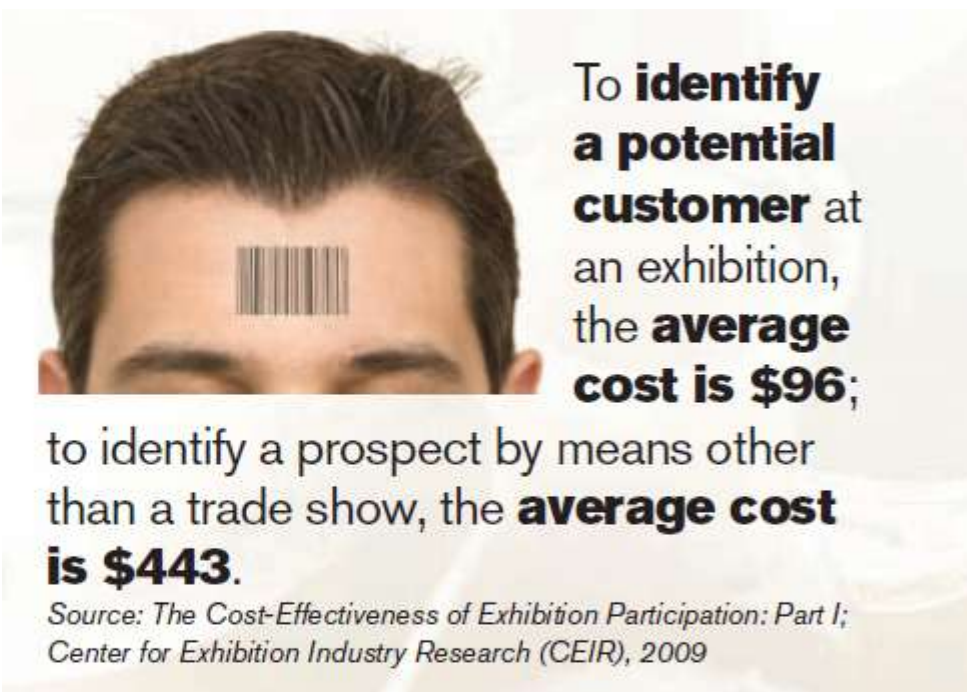
As the ARF's research confirms, effectiveness in exhibiting as a marketing medium is a matter of commitment – i.e., committing to the show, committing enough and the right booth staff to the event. When an exhibitor actively engages a prospect on the show floor, as the graph above illustrates, sales are likely to follow.

CEIR RESEARCH – COST EFFECTIVENESS OF EXHIBITION PARTICIPATION

It could be said that the heartbeat of a trade show floor is the leads gathered there by exhibitors. Two significant reports were produced by CEIR in 2009 that provide us with the cost of a trade show lead and the stats on how many sales calls it takes to close a sale with (and without) a trade show lead.

These reports, entitled *The Cost Effectiveness of Exhibition Participation*, Parts I and II, can be purchased at www.ceir.org. If you are a CEIR or IAEE member, you can download them for free.

Let's look at the first report and the cost of the first face-to-face contact made at a trade show. CEIR conducted a survey among sales managers throughout the industry to determine that in order to make an initial, face-to-face visit with a potential customer, companies can expect to incur the following costs:



This graphic is from the April 2010 *Tradeshow Executive* Magazine

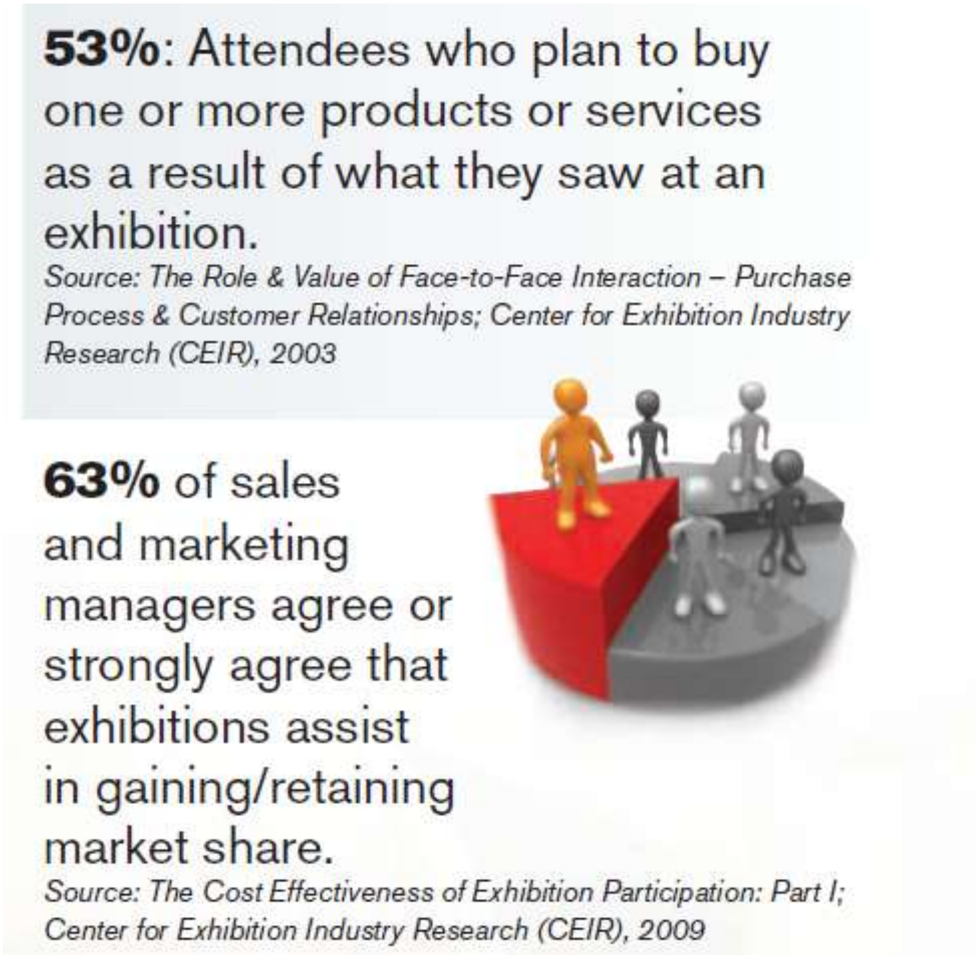
The cost of making **first face-to-face contact** with a potential customer through an exhibition lead is **$96**, compared to $1,039 without.

Source: The Cost-Effectiveness of Exhibition Participation: Part I; Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR), 2009

This graphic is from the April 2010 *Tradeshow Executive Magazine*

Clearly, exhibiting is a significantly more cost-effective method of making that first, face-to-face contact with a prospective customer – saving a company, on average, $943 per prospect. The CEIR report goes on to calculate how much it costs to identify a prospective customer, and concludes that companies can save $347 *per prospect* through a lead at a trade show.

Other highlights from this report are shown below. The graphics are from an April 2010 issue of *Tradeshow Executive*.



This graphic is from the April 2010 *Tradeshow Executive* Magazine

How Much Does It Cost to Close a Sale?

Closing a sale starts and ends with less expense when that sale was initiated by a lead gathered at a trade show. In Part II of CEIR's study on costs, CEIR determined exactly how much it costs to close a sale with and without that initial trade show lead. The graphics are from the April 2010 edition of T*radeshow Executive.*

It takes an average of **3.5 sales calls to close a sale with a lead from an exhibition**, compared to 4.5 sales calls without a lead from an exhibition.

Source: The Cost-Effectiveness of Exhibition Participation: Part II; Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR), 2009

$2,092: The average cost of **3.5 sales calls** to a prospect acquired with a lead from an exhibition.

$2,659: The average cost of **4.5 sales calls** to a prospect acquired without a lead from an exhibition.

Source: The Cost-Effectiveness of Exhibition Participation: Part II; Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR), 2009

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This graphic is from the April 2010 *Tradeshow Executive* Magazine

The **average cost to close a sale with an exhibition lead is $2,188** (including costs to identify a potential customer and 3.5 sales calls to the prospect). To close a sale **without an exhibition lead** costs **$3,102**.

Source: The Cost-Effectiveness of Exhibition Participation: Part II; Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR), 2009

On average, an **organization saves $914 per new customer** by closing a sales call with a lead from an exhibition versus by non-exhibition means.

Source: The Cost-Effectiveness of Exhibition Participation: Part II; Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR), 2009

This graphic is from the April 2010 *Tradeshow Executive* Magazine

The data is clear and convincing. Exhibiting provides more than just brand awareness. It is a valuable marketing medium in that it can actually save the seller money in the sales process. Exhibiting is simply a more cost-effective way to do business, as CEIR has illustrated above.

SUMMER OF 2010 REPORT IN *TRADESHOW EXECUTIVE* MAGAZINE

A new report was cited in the *Tradeshow Executive Magazine*. The details of it are below:

> **VSS Sees Slow but Steady Growth in Trade Show Spending Through 2014**
>
> *By Hil Anderson, senior editor*
>
> *New York, NY* – Spending on trade shows is expected to creep slowly but steadily higher in the coming four years, according to new estimates from Veronis Suhler Stevenson (VSS).

Overall spending in 2014 will rise approximately 4% over this year's level as the world economy picks up steam, although it will likely be closer to 2012 before trade show organizers see much noticeable improvement in space sales and space rates paid by exhibitors.

"We forecast that exhibit space will decline again in 2011 and increase in 2012 and thereafter," Hal Greenberg, a partner in VSS Structured Capital Funds, told *Trade Show Executive*. "As for pricing, 2010 was essentially flat to 2009 and will start to increase again in 2011."

Greenberg's conclusions were part of a sweeping study of communications spending in the U.S. conducted by VSS, the private equity firm that owns, or has owned, stakes in several major show organizers, including Hanley Wood, Advanstar Communications, Canon Communications LLC and Penton Media. The outlook for trade shows and b-to-b media in general was considered fairly rosy due to anticipated shifts in marketing spending from traditional general advertising to more targeted campaigns aimed at specific end users.

Summary – What Does This All Mean For You?

Exhibitions hold value when an exhibitor commits to the experience and is well-prepared for the event. As shown in this Chapter there is solid and significant research which supports event participation. These statistics can be used to show your management the worthiness of this marketing function.

But how do **you know when a show is** right for you? That's what we'll discuss next.

Check out the Let's Talk Trade Shows website for free and paid webinar education.

http://www.letstalktradeshows.com/webinars-2/

CHAPTER TWO: SHOULD YOU EXHIBIT?

I once asked a show manager to tell me the most important criteria an exhibitor should consider when choosing a show. ‘Simple,’ he said without hesitation, ‘it comes down to three things – audience, audience and audience.’

The first and most important question to ask your marketing and sales team in determining whether or not to include trade shows in your marketing mix is: Do our customers and prospects attend trade shows, and if so, which ones? In working with my clients over the years, I am amazed that when it gets down to it, often a company doesn’t really know the answer to this question. And if they don’t know this about their customers, then do they really know their customers?

Don’t hesitate to ask your customers directly whether or not they attend trade shows. Not only do you want to know if they attend them or have attended them in the past, but moreover you need to ascertain whether or not this attendance made a difference in their purchasing decisions.

BE CAREFUL ABOUT YOUR ASSUMPTIONS ON EXHIBITING

Before we delve into the assessment of which shows fit into your marketing strategy, let’s consider **HOW** your team is making marketing decisions. So often in the past companies exhibited because they had always gone to a show. In today’s economy, each show should be scrutinized for the contributions its makes.

However, the method for decision making process can have flawed assumptions. My colleague Rick McPartlin and his co-founder Jane Adamson of The Revenue Game produce a monthly newsletter for executive clients entitled the *CEO Challenge.* In a recent issue, they discussed decision making assumptions.

I want to share a portion of the newsletter since there is a trade show case study. This should cause some conversation around the water cooler in your office!

- Assumption testing has always been important in organizations. Right now, however, it's more critical than ever. Markets are evolving so fast that the wrong assumptions can be fatal.
- Worse yet, an organization's inability to routinely identify and test assumptions is a cultural defect that can be very difficult to correct.

CASE STUDY

Provided is a simple, true example of how one bad assumption leads to a myriad more. Let's say that an organization is attending a trade show with the assumption that the best way to succeed is to attract as many people as possible into the booth and get their contact information.

Based on this master assumption – we must attract as many people as possible — the organization makes all of these secondary assumptions:

- The booth needs to be huge and highly visible.
- We need sensory devices, contests, premiums and actors.
- We'd better be a show sponsor so our name is on the program, the walls and the big banners.
- We'll need plenty of power, labor and technology in our booth so we can electronically swipe contact information and download the data in order to follow-up with everyone.
- We need a new booth because it can't look the same as last year.
- We need to increase our trade show budget to X.
- With this huge budget, the sales team must close $X million in new business from this effort.
- This show will now require a significant effort from multiple departments – sales, marketing, finance, operations, and the executive team who banks on lofty results to propel the business toward its quarterly and annual goals.

What If Someone Had Spoken Up?

What if one person in the organization had been encouraged to challenge the initial master assumption? That person might have brought up these arguments:

Having a lot of traffic in the booth will mean we won't have time to separate real prospects from tire kickers. We also won't have time to work with the strategic clients and prospects we've invited to the show.

A massive effort to fill our database means lots of pre-show prep and post-show follow-up for a team of sales reps that doesn't have the resources or budget to absorb an enormous influx of extra work hours.

90% of the names we put in the database won't be prospective customers, so afterward we'll need to talk to everyone and find the 10% who are real prospects. This effort will actually reduce sales time with qualified prospects.

We know that 10-20% of the 90% non-customers will ask us to quote or send us RFPs, which will further reduce sales team time to sell strategic prospects. At the same time these extra RFPs will add to the work burden of the various support teams, decreasing their ability to meet their budgets.

Since the post-show marketing program will require a big follow-up effort with limited staff, it will be a long time before we get to the 10% who are the qualified prospective buyers. By that time, many of them will have already bought from someone else. We will be lucky if we can get 33% of that 10% to buy, and we'll never hit our revenue goals at that rate.

These challenges highlight the fact that "more people" wasn't the right strategy for the show. And a challenger would have saved the organization many headaches and put millions back into the top and bottom lines. However, since nobody challenged the master assumption, the ramifications negatively affected the company and its strategy for a year.

Solution

If your company's culture isn't proficient in identifying, challenging, and testing assumptions … you're not alone. Therefore, you can gain considerable advantage by evolving into an organization that welcomes and benefits from this kind of consistent, strategic analysis.

ACTION PLAN

1. **Make sure your organization supports assumption testing.**

   There are two tests that demonstrate whether your organization is good at identifying and testing assumptions.

   First, when new employees join the organization, find out what they informally learn about the company and its culture. Preferred cultural norms pass from person to person. Listen carefully to what you hear. Are new employees inspired to challenge the status quo? To speak up in meetings? To drive new initiatives? Or are they encouraged to get along and keep their heads low? If there's any semblance of the latter, you have a serious cultural problem.

   Second, observe what gets rewarded and why. When team members question an assumption, what do they receive? A look of annoyance, an eye roll, or a pat on the back? If a company wants a culture that identifies and tests assumptions, it must reward that behavior openly and consistently.

2. **Start listening for assumptions. You'll be surprised by how many are being made.**

   There are two basic categories of assumptions – those made about the external marketplace and those made about and internal environment of the company. Here are just a few general examples of common assumptions companies make.

External Assumptions

- ✓ Who are our best prospects and clients
- ✓ What's happening in markets, organizations, industries
- ✓ What our competitors are doing
- ✓ What will happen in the economy
- ✓ Who our best suppliers and partners are and why
- ✓ Which trends are real and the impact they'll have

Internal Assumptions

- ✓ What our strategy is and where we want to be in X years
- ✓ How teams, individuals and businesses should be evaluated and rewarded measured
- ✓ The purpose for an existing policy, process, or metric
- ✓ How the organization and teams should work together
- ✓ Roles and impact of different teams and individuals

3. Identify the risks.

In the ideal world, you'd take all of the assumptions from # 2 and test each and every one. Unfortunately, that's not possible or practical. Instead, you can start by requiring that assumptions simply be labeled as such. Separate the known facts from assumptions being made.

How do you implement this step? First, keep a list of assumptions during any important discussion. Then when someone draws on one of those assumptions, ask two important questions:

- ❖ "What makes you believe that to be the case?" Listen for substantiation. If the answers are vague or hearsay or judgmental, then keep probing.

- ❖ "If we're wrong about this assumption, will it cause substantial harm?" If the answer is NO, then move forward, but look for ways to substantiate the assumption in the future. If the answer is YES, then testing is required.

4. Test the most costly, dangerous assumptions.

For those assumptions that will cause substantial harm, focus your team to identify the best and fastest way to uncover the truth and mitigate the risk. The investigation could take numerous forms such as talking to customers or prospects, formal market research, internal surveys, competitive research, “secret shopping,” or even simply asking someone who may have the true facts.

5. **Encourage and reward the challengers.**

   Remember the old adage “Focus on what is right, not who is right.” When there’s a win, credit belongs to the whole team. When there’s a loss, it’s the leader’s fault for not identifying and validating assumptions.

   Thus, an important way to encourage challenges is to publicly embrace them. That doesn’t mean you have to engage in long discussion every time someone asks a question, but it does mean that when someone challenges an assumption, it should be labeled, accepted, considered, and appreciated.

   It’s also important to establish the difference between negativity and positive assumption testing. Negativity simply shuts down ideas. Positive assumption testing asks questions and forces to the surface thoughtful discussions: What evidence do we have that this is true right now? What will be the result if we’re wrong? What alternatives might we be exploring if this assumption proved false?

   Finally, you can include assumption testing as a critical behavior that is expected and discussed during regular performance evaluations. That certainly elevates it from a “tolerated” status to a mandatory action.

6. **Identify assumptions (and how you’ll test them) in your annual, quarterly and project-based plans.**

   Make sure each assumption is clearly identified, and understand how the company will test and react to the results. Then make sure teams are testing and reporting back in real time.

   When an assumption is tested and proves to be faulty, don’t punish the team for the original assumption; instead, praise the team for identifying, testing, and preventing expensive mistakes that hinged from that assumption. Point out the importance of the new conclusion and the resulting benefit to the company. The team will now have a new direction based on facts, not assumptions, and that is worth celebrating.

CONCLUSION

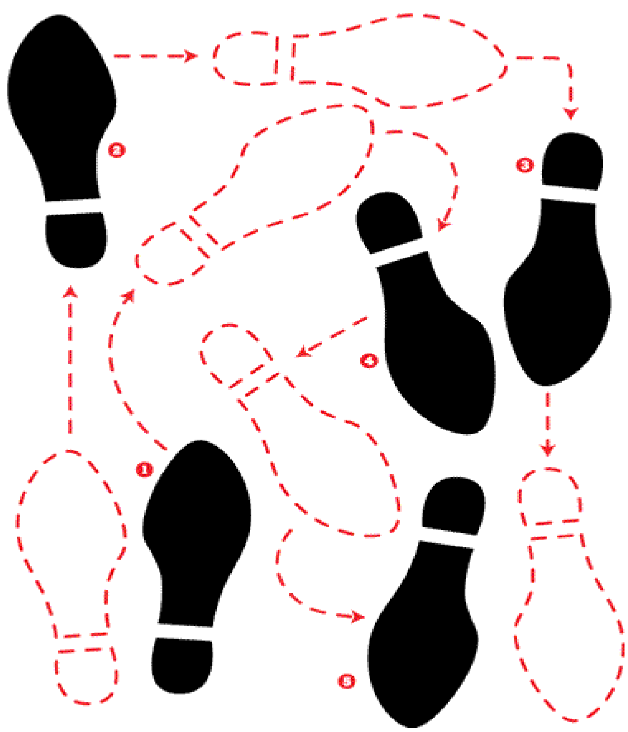
Part of the benefit in testing assumptions is greater clarity, completeness and accuracy in cost considerations. Understand why there are different assumptions from different teams, or roles within the company, or from those that impact your success from outside the company (customers, partners and vendors). Understanding their assumptions will help us see gaps, inhibitors, time considerations and cost impacts for all the parties.

Exploring this material might challenge your marketing team, but if you execute the process outlined a better decision could be made on which shows should be on your calendar.

RESEARCHING TRADE SHOWS

How can you find out your prospects' habits directly?

One solution is to conduct a market research study and cover this topic as well as other relevant trends within a focus group. Look at whether or not your product is better shown in person. Does it need explanation or education? Some products, and some buyers, need both a touch factor – literally or figuratively – and a trust factor that can only come from face-to-face exposure. Some buyers need the kind of intimate, kinesthetic environment that a trade show can provide, offering a memorable way to impact and engage customers by utilizing all their senses. Not all buyers of your products are the same. Buyers are human – meaning they are complicated. Offering different learning styles to meet different needs widens your net.



This graphic is from *Exhibitor* Magazine

Most importantly, talk with show organizers. Their job is to be an expert on who attends their events, using concrete, measurable registration surveys and audits to gather this information. Initially, you can review their prospectus; then, if it looks like a fit for you, call them directly. Often they will invite you to come to a show as their guest to check it out before you invest your energy and money in exhibiting. They know that a successful show is predicated on the right buyers finding the right vendors. Consequently, organizers make a science out of profiling their customers, as should you.

To begin profiling your customer, start by answering these questions:

- Who do you want to attract to your exhibit booth?
- Who are the ideal customers for your product and/or service and what is important to them?

Depending on whether your market is business-to-consumer, or business-to-business, your criteria will be different. Regardless of the specific terms you will need to define your customer, the broad range of data categories are demographics (who is my customer), psychographics (what do they do), behavioral (how do they do it) and causation (why they do what they do).

According to Barry Siskind in a CEIR report called, *The Right Place to Exhibit – A Strategic Approach*, "causation is the sum total of all the demographic, psychographic and behavioral data you have accumulated. It matches up your features and benefits with your customers' perception of their importance."

As you profile your target audience, you can ask questions to find out where they are and the best way to reach them. Given that shows have various geographic focuses (regional, national or international), you will want to choose those ideally suited to both you and the audience you serve. Ultimately, you have plenty of choices, though finding the right show can be challenging. "The right show is a blend of audience, cost and logistics. Good event selection is a solid base upon which the rest of your exhibit program is built," says Siskind.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following information reveals some insights and questions that Mike Courtney, the Founder of Aperio Insights. He suggests asking the following questions when determining whether and where your company should exhibit:

ASK ABOUT TRADE SHOWS

The first point is to simply ask others about the trade shows that they attend and enjoy. Make it a habit to ask customers and prospects alike:

- Which trade shows do you attend?
- Which is the “best” one for finding new products?
- How are the shows different and what makes them different?
- If they often attend more than one – which one is most important?
- Which one would they skip if they had to choose?
- Which show have you wanted to attend but haven’t yet made a priority?

LEVERAGE LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS

Trade associations can be great places to ask about relevant trade shows. If your local association is primarily vendor-centric, be sure to ask members to distinguish between shows that are vendor-heavy and those that actually attract end customers.

Often you will find that different trade shows have a different role or purpose in a customer’s mind. Some are for finding new products, some for meeting with existing vendors, and some are attended more for their educational seminars than for the exhibits.

Keep a list to jog your memory

Be prepared with a list of potential shows to use to jog their memory after you have asked them about the shows that are top of mind. Remember, not everyone will be able to recall the names of ALL the shows they are aware of or have even attended in the past. We all get busy and can forget about an event until we are reminded of it.

What type of customer are you looking for?

Perhaps you are currently doing business with lots of consumers but want to increase your wholesale business-to-business customers. Will one show help you reach both or should you consider another show that is more focused on the B2B side?

A great bonus from employing this type of pre-show or show selection research is that it gives your sales and business development team a low-risk conversation starter to approach prospects with.

Who else goes to each show?

It's important to know *who* is attending each show – and with which attendees are you trying to make new contacts.

Here's an example of a rich response you might get from this line of questioning:

> *"Well, the management team likes to attend the XYZ show to look at new products and meet with vendors, but the ABC show is more for the tech guys – we usually just send engineers to that one. There is another one our marketing & PR team attends."*

Audits of Shows

While, undoubtedly, exhibit sponsors do their best to collect hard data, keep in mind that they like to show you what makes them look good. Don't we all? Learn to view, assess and value statistics correctly. Unfortunately, some events, in an effort to entice a potential exhibitor, have been accused of inflating their figures to show greater traffic density. Today, event audits are becoming more and more valuable. Still a relatively new tool in the event world, audits are common in other marketing-oriented industries, such as print advertising and websites. Glenn Schutz, in *Event Audits Can Help Select the Best Tradeshows*, quotes the president and CEO of global media auditor of BPA Worldwide:

> *The online world has led to instant gratification with marketers wanting to see results of their online advertising in real time, [and] that whole sense of urgency and metrics carries over to anyone who has responsibility for either in-print, online or in-person. Trade shows are no*

longer operating in their own silo when it comes to measurement – everything is being looked at.

Some shows today provide independent, third-party audited accounting, and many companies won't even consider attending a show if it does not have this type of information history. When you are in the selection process, ask for an audit statement. Audits are standardized, so, as a user, you can compare events accurately across the board. Typically, they measure and verify show attendance and collected demographic data. VERIS Consulting conducts the verification of exhibition records, including direct on-site observation, examination of registration systems and testing of attendee records. Total attendance counts are verified, as well as records and record-keeping systems. Post-show analysis may include direct confirmation sampling, reconciliation of attendance lists, and elimination of duplicate names and verification of demographic data with the source of documentation.

On the flip side, subjective data, such as word of mouth, can play a very important role in balancing out promotional and sales-driven information and statistics. Do others feel a given show is worth the time and money? The more exhibitors and attendees you talk with, the better. In your inquiry, check into as many details as you can to get a fuller picture of their pre- and post activities (not just how the show went), and what they would do differently, if anything. Negative responses don't mean much if the exhibitor wasn't actively participating in the event in the first place.

Using a combination of subjective and hard data will not only help you determine which show is right for you, but also help you formulate quality intentions and objectives that can be met at that particular show. Do your homework by giving more attention to planning, execution and follow-up -- ahead of time.

AN ARTICLE FROM BPA WORLDWIDE

The following material was found on The International Center for Exhibitor and Event Marketing (www.iceem.net) website and it discusses the importance of audits.

> **Determining Exhibitor ROI at B-to-B Tradeshow Events**
>
> In line with BPA Worldwide ongoing commitment of providing maximum assurance of attendance data accuracy at face-to-face events, the global auditor of media undertook a research study to measure the perceived value of independent event audits and how they are utilized when marketers are deciding to exhibit at any given event.

The study had three main objectives:

- Determine the key ROI drivers for event exhibitors
- Determine extent to which a detailed audit report of verified attendance including demographic data (or lack thereof) would compel or impede exhibitors to add an event to their plan
- Determine extent to which exhibitors hold show organizers accountable for delivering on promises of audience quantity and quality

The study's full detail can be found online at BPAWW.

As a result of the data collected during the survey, a number of implications regarding the value of independent event audits and where they fit into an exhibitor's decision to attend a show can be drawn, including:

- Companies are planning to exhibit at fewer shows next year, suggesting that they will be more selective in which shows they choose.
- Key criteria that influence the decision to exhibit include:
  a. Audience quality in terms of purchase influence
  b. Past success of a show
- Event audits show increased importance in the minds of exhibiting companies. *Overall, nearly 50% of respondents say an independent audit is either "Extremely/Somewhat Important" in verifying quality of event/tradeshow audience. That figure rises to 61% for event managers.*
- Event and tradeshow organizers should be held accountable for their audiences as defined by quality promised and purchasing power.
- While event audits are a significant influence across titles, they are even more important to both the gatekeepers and the final decision-makers.

Perhaps the most interesting conclusion to be drawn from all of the data gathered by BPA is the fact that, overwhelmingly, across all titles and company sizes, respondents are demanding accountability from their event organizers in terms of purchasing power and titles. These are the very same metrics that independent, third-party event audits can offer.

Audited event data can work to the benefit of both tradeshow organizers and exhibitors. Since face-to-face events are considered the most expensive among all media platforms, exhibitors require trustworthy attendance data on which to base their decisions and formulate their ROI—especially in a down economy.

Using data from an independent, third-party event audit, organizers can drill down into their event's attendance figures and identify exhibitors' target markets. Organizers can also use event audits to prove that, in spite of economic conditions, key buyers continue to attend their show. Independent event audits are a win-win proposition for the entire events industry.

Decision Time for Your Calendar of Shows

Keep in mind that the best shows aren't always the "most attended" shows. What you are looking for, as are show organizers, is quality – that right buyer.

Defining your target audience, profiling your potential and current customers, and researching relevant trade shows that give you access to that particular group of buyers are the beginning of creating an overall event strategy. Each step in the process reduces risk and exposure of your company's resources by minimizing expenses and maximizing ROI. By their nature, events have an air of unpredictability. Thus, everything you can do to organize and plan ahead of time will help reduce risk while at the same time increase the number of qualified leads – the Holy Grail of marketing – potentially available to you through trade show participation.

Now that you have decided to exhibit, let's plan for success.

Check out the Let's Talk Trade Shows website for free and paid webinar education.

http://www.letstalktradeshows.com/webinars-2/

CHAPTER THREE: EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING AND EVENTS

The term experiential marketing might be new to you. So that we are on the same page with each other let me provide one definition: making your brand real and relevant in the world of your customers.

For this eBook discussion, we are talking about trade shows and events where buyers and sellers are brought together at a specific time and place. Normally many activities occurred at these shows like education, keynote speeches, demonstrations on the show floor, etc. But we need to ask ourselves – was this show an experience?

The experts in the experiential marketing world tell us that this type of marketing engages all senses. Typically, it activates the emotional and rational triggers within us and is intended to motivate us. The trade show function will employ some experiential tactics, but few have all the senses covered completely.

A core principle of experiential marketing is: the customer and/or prospect is the one having the experience, so it is ALL about them and that experience. Traditional old school marketing is all about me – me – me. So often the marketer is so busy telling the customer and/or prospect about features, functions, etc., they forget to listen.

"Most marketing organizations are guilty of this; they push information out to an audience," says Mike Hamilton, President of the experiential brand company, GetSynchronicity. He continues with "marketers have an agenda and they know what they want to say. They have honed a message they want to communicate in hopes the target audience would listen to them."

Graphic from Sticky Commerce website

How to Heighten Your Listening Skills

Uncovering what is vital in your target markets requires keen listen skills. To keep your fingers on the pulse of your constituent's research should be deployed. Chris Brogan the bestselling author of *Trust Agents* talks about "listening posts." These can be social media related or you can gather of current and former customers, prospects in some fashion of qualitative and quantitative research. Please understand that this is not a onetime effort but an ongoing process to constantly be attuned to the shifts of your market.

The core principle of marketing - know your audience! What are their emotional and rational triggers and inhibitors? What do they need to feel and understand in order to act on your objectives?

It is important that the experience you create puts your audience in a position of power and confidence. After all, it's all about them, not about you or your products. Your job is to make it as personal as possible.

As far as Mike is concerned, experiential marketing has three components. It must be interactive, personally relevant and have an emotional connection. In our conversation he emphasized the importance of making the event "personally relevant for each attendee. So you take the time to find out what this person really cares about and you are directing the conversation around the attendees concerns and not about you. In this fashion you can still talk about your offerings but it is in response to listening to them first.

Often the attendee walks away from an engagement with a company feeling that the company does not understands their needs. In part, this is due to "pushing" information out rather than listening and responding to them. All of this creates a big disconnect between a potential buyer and seller. The solution is to have your company and the booth personnel show they understand what the attendee cares about/ hot buttons.

In the position of being a master listener, Mike challenges us to understand "what does our customer care about and how do we open the conversation?" Each marketer should have the answers to the following:

- Figure out who your target audience is
- Determine what they care about
- Craft a way to engage them on this level

Then create an ice breaker line that aligns with what their real concerns are. You want to start conversations with people to discover are they your target audience or not. If they are not, move them on so you can talk with some other potential prospect. There is more about your conversation in your booth in Chapter Five.

Brainstorming about Customers' Requirements

Research in its many forms should be deployed to uncover and answer the questions posed above. Far too often the time and necessary energy to assess and answer these critical questions is left undone. You could start the process by brainstorming with various team members within your organization. Let it be known that you are soliciting their attitudes and opinions, and that there are no right or wrong responses. If you are leading the discussion, be as neutral as possible so you do not squelch the creative process. If necessary, hire an outside facilitator to lead the discussion.

During the brainstorming process, you might come up with several great ideas, now it is time to test these with your actual audience. There are a couple of ways you can tune into your audience. They are:

- Conduct a qualitative call or visit with your audience and pose your ideas to solicit their reactions.
- Send out an email survey to your audience. Entice them with a gift certificate which one individual would win upon completing the questionnaire.

Once you have the research data, another brainstorming session with your team is necessary to finalize the key concepts and information. The final result will show you how to initiate the conversation that is relevant in engaging the customer or prospect.

"The power of a live event is a two way conversation" Mike says. A trade show is where you can open up a conversation and start a relationship. "Not only do they learn from us, we can learn from them" Mike continues.

Case Study – NextGen

In this section, Mike Hamilton from GetSynchronicity shares a few highlights from one of his clients, NextGen. The following provides highlights of the engagement:

The Challenge

NextGen launched a new booth at HIMSS 2009 with two primary objectives: stake claim to its industry leadership position and imprint visitors with the company's new branding campaign.

The Solution

A series of linked touch points immersed visitors in an experiential journey. Custom 3D video animations brought life and depth to the brand and piqued the interest of passersby. Specially trained brand ambassadors individually engaged admiring viewers with questions about what brought them to HIMSS and the specific challenges they were looking to solve. Attendees whose interests and needs aligned with NextGen solutions were invited into the booth for the next touch point: an interactive presentation featuring a menu of leading healthcare management issues. The presentation focused customer concerns, not NextGen products. Visitors selected their presentation topic preferences from the menu, creating their own, personalized mini seminar. Following the presentation, brand ambassadors escorted visitors to one of two additional touch points. Prospects who had specific questions or wanted personalized product demo were paired with a NextGen solutions experts. Visitors who wanted to learn more but weren't ready for a one-on-one conversation were escorted into the "Interactive Garden" for self-guided learning from a digital library of case studies, product demos, videos, and white papers.

The Results

The team of brand ambassadors, the 3-D video, the interactive presentation, and the self-guided learning stations made quite a difference. A total of 545 highly qualified visitors participated in the experience, a NextGen record.

NextGen is a leader in their industry. Mike likes to assert that "leaders do not talk a lot about themselves. Leaders listen to people." With NextGen's great history of entering the marketplace by listening first and then developing products and services, Mike challenged them to extend this behavior to their booth at a show. So rather than pushing information at an audience via a typical theatre presentation, which can drone on and on, telling an audience how "we do this and that," NextGen decided to LISTEN.

Mike and the NextGen team brainstormed and created nine different conversation topics for the booth. None of the topics were about a product or service of NextGen! All the conversation topics were deemed to be "top of mind" for the target audience: physician strategies, the AARA act, pay for service, etc. NextGen wanted to be in the position of starting a conversation in the theater presentation and then having the audience pursue the dialogue with staffers in other parts of their booth.

In the theater, they used an audience response system and asked the audience – what do you want to hear about? Whatever topic the majority of the audience voted on, a short mini-presentation on that subject was delivered. These mini-presentations were a minute and a half in duration. After three mini presentations, the audience moved into the demo stations in another part of the booth for one-on-one conversations with staff.

NextGen was using their position as a market leader to listen to the audience and demonstrate to the audience that they do have their arms around the concerns of the entire industry. They wanted to convey "if you have these concerns, NextGen can be a resource for you and help you wrestle this subject to the ground."

GetSynchronicity and NextGen found that this method engaged the audience on a meaningful level that was personally relevant to each of them. The information was not pushed at them, they chose it. The philosophy demonstrates that "everything becomes personal because I am invested in it."

NextGen branding is emotionally based and they used 3D graphics to bring that alive for the show. They also incorporated testimonials into the graphics. Not only did this tie in an emotional appeal, it also brought credibility because these were peers talking to peers.

THE PROCESS AND FLOW IN THE NEXTGEN BOOTH

GetSynchronicity trained Brand Ambassadors who initially engaged the traffic and brought folks into the theater. Once seated, the audience chose the topics they wanted to hear about via a digital audience response system. After the three short segments were presented, the audience was led to various parts of the exhibit to have further, one-on-one discussions with a NextGen booth worker.

The result of this scenario – *double the qualified leads*! Not only did this experiential marketing model continue the thought leadership position of NextGen it also created more leads.

How to Engage Your Trade Show Audience

If you are new to the experiential world, the material below should be reviewed and assessed for your next trade show. This material is from Ian McGonnigal, SVP of Client Strategy and Brand Performance at Jack Morton Worldwide, as found on one of his blog posts.

1. Start with the audience. In order to design an effective experience or series of experiences, it's important to understand your audience first. What are their emotional and rational triggers and inhibitors? What do they need to feel and understand in order to act on your objectives? Make sure your experience puts your audience in a position of power and confidence. After all, its all about them, not about you or your products. Although you are creating an experience for the masses, its important you drive a sense of intimacy with each and ever member of the audience. Make it as personal as possible. This foundation can be used not only in experience design, but in product development, sales process, customer service training and beyond.

2. Know your objective. Event marketers often get trapped in their own repetitive cycle of events. Year-over-year they build and plan the same events, perhaps swapping out products and messaging from time-to-time. Its important to step back and examine the business, marketing and sales objective of your program, and then the contribution of each event tactic to that program. Establishing appropriate objectives for your event is the easy part. Sticking to these objectives and designing unique experiences which truly deliver against these goals is often the challenge. Focus on as few objectives as possible. This will ensure you invest time, budget and resources appropriately to drive success.

3. Design the experience to be immersive with all six senses in mind. Yes, I said six. The sixth being rational intuition. If it all comes together, your attendees will feel and think they "belong." It's important your experience is as immersive as possible, surrounding attendees from all sides and use external influencers to affect internal responses. Event marketers often focus on the visual, sometimes the audible and seldom any of the other senses. Here are some thoughts on engaging the senses.

- **Sight:** Make it compelling: exciting video, vivid photography, appropriate colors and graphics all play a part.

- **Sound:** The volume is often just as important as the audible content itself. Remember to use ambience and silence to your advantage. These can be powerful engagers or distracters.

- **Touch:** Give your attendees something to touch, and to engage with. Think about texture. Holding something in their hand has been proven to drive value perception and ownership. Also don't forget about temperature or air quality. At a tradeshow even plush carpet with a thick pad creates a welcome retreat for foot-weary business infantry. In speaking sessions, make seating comfortable, but not too comfortable.

- **Smell:** Site inspections are important. If a hotel conference room has a mold or mildew problem, this can detract from the experience. The same goes for strong cleaning products. Plan for the aroma of attendees. Ambient smell can be just as distracting as ambient sound.

- **Taste:** Especially important for hospitality settings. Make sure the food and drink is of the highest quality possible.

4. Don't forget about interaction. Interaction with things, as well as people. Arguably, the most important part of any experience is the people present and audience interaction with those people. Human interaction can make or break an attendee's experience. Be professional, be engaging, be friendly, and most of all, be human. This is what will build real long term brand relationships.

5. Tell a Story. In my earlier post Storytelling in Social Media and Events, I described some ideas on how to incorporate effective storytelling as a tool to engage and interact with audiences on both an emotional and rational level. You can tell a story at a single event or across several tactics. Success will be determined by your audience, your message and the way in which the story is told.

6. Stay on brand. Do not sacrifice your brand intent to create an experience. Ensure the type, quality and tonality of your experience reflects well against your brand personality. Anything else will hinder audience engagement and long-term retention of message and brand association with the experience.

7. Be authentic. Authenticity is critical in driving trust with your audiences. Ensure your experiences are genuine, authentic and true. Consider adopting a case study approach within your experiences driven by customers, partners, etc. to further empower authenticity.

Is your event an experience? These are just some guiding principles to get started. As marketers, we should walk around in the shoes of our audiences as often as possible to build effective and relevant experiences both face-to-face and virtually. As always, if you have other ideas, please share!

STORYTELLING AND EVENT MARKETING

Ian mention in his blog post above the topic of storytelling. In 2009 I interviewed Ian McGonnigal, and asked him to discuss storytelling and event marketing.

Joyce: Well one of the topics that were going to talk about is storytelling. I love a good story. So tell us with event marketing, how does that intertwine with storytelling?

Ian: Thanks Joyce and I think that there are several ways. I think first of all, as event marketers and especially experiential marketers, we need to do as good a job telling the story as possible. And a story can be as simple as a case study when you're telling somebody about a situation that one of your customers were involved in, the solution of course which is your product and then the great results that they got from that product. That is about as simple as a story is as you can create.

But storytelling can be expanded well beyond the face to face event and into the social community, and there are several ways to do that. And it's really quite simple. If you take a look at to what we all learned back in grade school about storytelling, there are several things that come to mind that you should really take a look at when you're building stories in and around you're events.

The **first** of which is to have a purpose. If you want me to tell a story, you need to have a purpose of that's story. Whether you're in a bar with some friends telling a joke, the purpose of course is to get them to laugh and then maybe buy you a drink right? If you are looking to sell something at an event, the purpose of course is to drive sales so the story should be as relevant to potential customers as possible. So whether you're face to face or online, make sure your thinking strategically about what the purpose is of your story. Are you going to tell it all at once or are you going to tell in chapters or pieces or some of it is online, some of it goes offline. It's important again to make sure you have a purpose to that story.

The **second** is to have a theme so beyond the purpose, what is the theme of your story? Is it cohesive? Is it something that people can follow and understand? Is there a real reason for people to believe in what you have to say?

The **third** is simplicity. Just keep it simple. The more complex stories are, especially on the online space, the more likely you are losing visitors. Twitter has a 140 characters or less. It's hard to tell a whole story, there but you can tell a part of it. There is another side out there I discovered which might be appropriate for me a few weeks ago called Woofer which allows you to post at least 1400 characters is used to have it. So, depending on the size and scope of your story, there's a tool for you but keep in mind, on the web, make sure that the message matches the medium.

So you want to build your stories so that there is a segment and then appropriate parts and are simple as possible. Don't tell any more information that's needed. Don't tell anything less. It is important to be creative and descriptive and keep people engaged, but don't go overboard. You're not writing a novel, you're telling a set up story to try to most likely sell something if you're listening to this. Also, structure and plot. So make sure your story has a structure. If you remember the structure again from grade school of how you have an action or reaction and all of those different things...

Joyce: Good and evil?

Ian: It's important, yeah, good and evil. Make sure your story does have a structure in the simplest terms of beginning, middle and an end. And somewhere in the middle, there will be a climax that people would have resolved. Use the right tools to tell your story. It's not always text based. Sometimes a video can tell a story. Sometimes a simple photograph can tell a story. Sometimes it's a link. Sometimes it's a PowerPoint.

So look at whatever tools are available and make sure you're using the right tool to tell your story. There are several presentations out there that tend to be text heavy and I've written many of them. It's about leaving something to the imagination so people, regardless of how they learned and understand carefully absorb the key messages that you're trying to get across.

Engagement: Involve your communities or your audiences in your story wherever possible, leave something to the imagination. Let them imagine themselves in the situation where your customers are or that your prospects are or that you're in so they can internalize at starting to understand and really see themselves as part of the story.

Protagonist: I believe in making the customer or audience the hero. Again, if they envision themselves as heroes, then you're going to go a long way because they can act upon that story as soon as you begin telling it.

Antagonist. As far as the antagonist is concerned, every story needs an antagonist. You need someone to be the villain or the super villain. And that villain might be a process that your company solves. That might be a pain point that you have with the software package or something you do in your business. It might be that you don't know how to do something. So remember, the villain is as important as the protagonist. You need to make sure that the two are there together and hopefully, the protagonist wins. And then be human above all else when you're telling the story whether it's face to face or online, it's okay to speak in simple terms.

Be Human. Sometimes, using big long words, although you might feel that it makes you sound impressive, is not the right thing to do. Speak plainly, speak in English or in whatever form of language that you might be used to using. But above all, be human.

Authenticity. And then finally, authenticity. If you're telling a story and it's not believable or it's made up or there isn't a component in there that makes it again human, makes it authentic, makes it truthful, then you're going to lose your audience. You're going to lose credibility and you might not have the opportunity to tell further stories if you lose that authenticity. And that in a nutshell is how to tell a story.

Sensory Marketing

In a recent Let's Talk Trade Shows blog post, I highlighted one of 4imprint's Blue Papers on the topic of **Sensory Marketing** which is a component of experiential marketing.

The definition of sensory marketing from the report:

> Sensory branding is based on the idea that we are most likely to form, retain and revisit memory when all five senses are engaged. By going beyond the traditional marketing media of sight and (sometimes) sound, brands can establish a stronger and longer-lasting emotional connection with consumers.

In studies, groups exposed to multi-sensory environments always outperform those in uni-sensory environments. Their recall is better all around—in quantity of information retained, clarity and duration. What's more, sensory information can affect consumer habits, such as restaurant turnover or purchasing. Marketers are taking heed.

Sound

Sound, for example, has the power to impact our mood and sway our buying habits. Researchers have found that the pace of background music affects customer perceptions of wait time, spending and turnover in stores and restaurants.

Fast music decreases spending in a retail environment, but increases turnover in restaurants. For restaurants more concerned with increasing the spend-per-customer ratio, slower music creates longer dining times, leading to a 29 percent increase in the average bill according to one experiment.

Touch

Our hands are an important link between our brains and the world. In fact, as humans we have more tactile receptors in our little fingers alone than we do on our entire back. These receptors help us explore objects in our surroundings. When we encounter a pleasant touch, the brain releases a hormone called oxytocin, leading to feelings of well-being and calm.

In research terms, this sense of touch is referred to as our haptic sense. Researchers have found that shoppers who touch a product are more likely to purchase, even as it relates to impulse buys. They've also found, logically, that the ability to touch a product increases our confidence in the item's quality.

Scent

Smells stimulate certain areas of the brain responsible for creating emotions and memories. The human nose can identify and recall as many as 10,000 scents and as much as 75 percent of our emotions are generated by what we smell.

Out of all the senses, smell is the only one with a direct link to the brain. As Dr. John Medina explains in his bestseller *Brain Rules*, "Every other sensory system must send a signal to the thalamus and ask permission to

> connect to the rest of the brain. Smell signals bypass the thalamus and go right to their brainy destinations.”
>
> Moreover, these smells instantly trigger messages in the limbic system, the part of the brain that contains keys to emotion, lust, perception and imagination. As C. Russell Brumfield, author of *Whiff!* writes, "The result is immediate: When we smell, we feel."

The 12 page Blue Paper concludes with this remark:

> All in all, the senses influence our emotions and decision-making. Touch, smell, taste, sound, and the look of a product all play an important role in our perceptions, attitudes and consumption of a product. Understanding those roles provides a valuable advantage in today’s marketplace.

What story are you telling via your booth and the other activities at you next trade show?

In this chapter the importance of the “experience” has been clearly outlined. It is vital for you to include some or all the elements discussed here. The positive experience in your booth and beyond will enable you to draw that prospect into the sales cycle and have them be a committed customer.

Draw on your own experiences of good experiential marketing. We all have been in the position of acknowledging great marketing whether it was a trip to Disney World or some other type of immersive marketing that thrilled you. Are those elements now in your exhibition offerings? If not, what can you do to create them? Hopefully this chapter has given you some excellent pointers to get started.

Check out the Let’s Talk Trade Shows website for free and paid webinar education.

http://www.letstalktradeshows.com/webinars-2/

CHAPTER FOUR: Preparing for the Show - Lists, Lists, and more Lists

> *Successful exhibitors know that the competition for the attendee's limited time on the exhibit floor is fierce. To get their fair share of booth traffic they do not just rent space, show up and hope people find them. They use targeted pre-show marketing to get on the right attendees' agenda before the show opens.*
> -Jefferson Davis, Competitive Edge

At this point, you want to know, "What is the show doing to draw an audience and what do I need to do?" Here's why: the reality is you are only going to get about 20% of the total number of attendees, but there's no guarantees you'll get that many unless you actively participate. The show organizers go to great length to bring a plethora of opportunities for you to be seen. It is recommended that you allow 15% of your budget so that you can include your company in some of these – and there is something for every budget!

One of your first pre-show activities is creating your campaign message. Why should attendees come to see you? What are the benefits of someone using your product or service? What specific problems are you solving for the purchaser?

"Everyone is interested in solving problems, reducing costs, improving results, and getting more value. Tell attendees specifically how you can help and they will come running to your exhibit," Jefferson Davis says in an article, *Identify and Attract the Right Visitors to Your Exhibit*, in the Diversified Business Communications marketing guide.

What Messages are you Conveying for the Show?

Each show has its own unique requirements regarding your messaging to that particular audience. The marketing department along with the group that is funding the trade show effort should collaborate and determine the parameters of the overall message to be delivered.

The National Restaurant Association's [NRA] Exhibitor Marketing Guide poses some questions which every exhibitor should answer as they prepare for their shows. They are:

- What messages do you want to deliver?
- What are the 1, 2 or 3 most important thoughts you want your visitors to remember after they leave your exhibit?
- What is the "Big Idea" or positioning statement you are trying to communicate?
- What is your exhibit goal?

They challenge each exhibitor with identifying and defining their target market.

Define the characteristics that profile your audience (role of the visitor, decision maker or influencer, size of company, price sensitivity, quality conscious, domestic or international or both, timing of needs and budget).

- Who is your target audience?
- What do you want to communicate?
- What do you want to bring home with you (measure results)?
- What is your position in the marketplace?
- Who is your competition?
- What is your competitive advantage?
- What is your unique selling proposition?
- What are the strengths of your NRA Show exhibit program?
- What are the weaknesses of your NRA Show exhibit program?
- What attracts your audience to your NRA Show exhibit?
- What do you want to occur in your exhibit?

Your show team should spend the time necessary to have each one of these questions answered.

USING YOUR SHOW'S MESSAGE TO REACH YOUR ENTIRE DATABASE OF NAMES

The unique show message should be delivered to all of your contacts whether they are going to the show or not. Use the show's platform to further penetrate your contact database with relevant information, thus moving the prospect and/or customer along the sales path.

This graph is from one of my presentations on using invitations to invite customers and prospects to your booth.

INVITING YOUR CUSTOMERS TO THE SHOW:

- Create a special invitation – it could be an engraved invitation to a special event or function held only for customers.
- Have a sales person hand deliver it so the customer knows it is special.
- Or have it sent in a unique package, again to differentiate it from normal material received.

Inviting Current Prospects

- Use the show as a focal point to invite them to come – even if they are not in the geographic region of the show. You do not know what their travel schedules are and they might be in the area for business purposes and can stop by to see you at your booth.
- Have a compelling message about the show and what is taking place. Entice them with provocative language and a call to action so they contact you to find out additional information.
- Send a message which has a "call to action" so the prospect stops by your booth. Have then destination bound for your booth because of your unique "compelling reason".
- Have the message deliver your precise understanding of their situation and how you can solve their problem.

Typically a show will provide you with a list of registered attendees that you can use for your invitation purposes. In fact some shows have pre-designed post cards you can have.

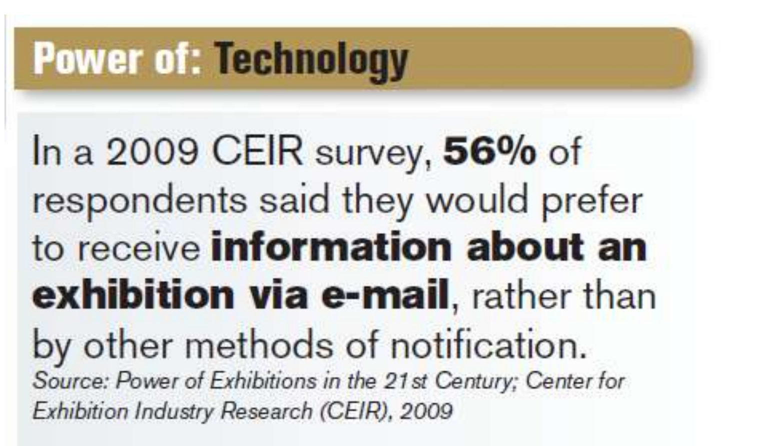
The Produce Marketing Association has created the following electronic postcards for their exhibitors to use. So check with your show to see if they have something similar.

This segmentation of your database for unique messages should be carried through the show and used for post show lead follow-up efforts.

In a blog post from [Tradeshow Insider Blog] they referenced the following. It is a great example of what has just been discussed.

> The VP of Sales for a furniture manufacturer stays ahead of his competition by having his sales team call every customer and key prospect before their most important annual show. They do not use the Trade Show attendee list; they call their entire target customer list. The sales team uses the upcoming show as a reason to call all of their target customers. The call is an invitation to a company-sponsored breakfast reception which has become an annual event at the show. When they learn that someone plans to attend the show, they take the opportunity to make sure they have the target customer's current cell phone number so they can reach them during the show. They follow-up with two personalized e-mails to people who have said they will attend. Target customers, who are not attending the show, also receive two e-mails plus are sent a "breakfast in a box" gift along with information about the season's new line of furniture and show specials.
>
> The company uses a similar strategy for every trade show they attend. A phone call and follow-up emails to attendees and target prospects who are not able to attend the show.
>
> It's a simple plan. It's easily executed by the sales team. They are careful not inundate their prospects and customers with lots of unwanted emails and promotional materials.

In a CEIR research report they found the following:



Power of: Technology

In a 2009 CEIR survey, **56%** of respondents said they would prefer to receive **information about an exhibition via e-mail**, rather than by other methods of notification.

Source: Power of Exhibitions in the 21st Century; Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR), 2009

Graphic from April2010 *Tradeshow Executive* Magazine

CEIR Research on Attendee Behavior

In case you are wondering if all this effort in time and money is worth it, look at these statistics according to CEIR:

FACT: 76% of attendees arrive at the show with an agenda.

FACT: Attendees spend quality time with 26 exhibitors at a show.

FACT: Half of these 26 exhibitors scheduled these appointments in advance.

FACT: Direct mail motivates 53% of previous show attendees and 29% of newcomers to visit your booth.

FACT: The frequency of mailings increases booth attendance – Your first mailing will get a 25% response but sending three mailings to the same audience will increase your response rate to 75%.

FACT: 33% of attendees visit a booth in response to an ad.

FACT: Exhibitors who advertise attract 56% more attendees than those who do not.

FACT: The # 1 way to attract a customer to your booth is with an invitation.

FACT: 90% of attendees use exhibitions as the # 1 source of purchasing information

Trade shows, as marketing events, have an air of buzz and excitement about them that you really cannot duplicate in the day-to-day world of business as usual. They are multi-dimensional, multi-media, so capitalize on what it offers. Work to bring a buzz factor into all of your marketing activities and let people feel your excitement! The result can be a viral, word-of-mouth promotion for your exhibit. More qualified customers and prospects will be aware of your company, and persuaded to attend your booth, even if you think your location is less than optimal. You can outperform your competitors, increase productivity and efficiencies, as well as your ROI.

Trade Show Marketing 101 – How to Increase Traffic to Your Booth

In this section, I want to cover some of the marketing opportunities you may have a chance to participate in through the show, and those you will need to create either partly, or entirely, on your own to enhance attendance at your booth.

The following information should be considered as part of your overall marketing strategy for your show participation. In the Social Media Chapter, I discuss the use of tools like Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. to draw an audience to your booth. However let's review these offerings.

Speaking Engagements – Some shows offer opportunities to speak at organized classes or information sessions during show hour's onsite. It can be a great way to demonstrate your company's expertise, create awareness and credibility, and establish a leadership role in your industry. If your company has a renowned CEO try and have them keynote the conference.

Sponsorships – This method can be as simple as sponsoring a reception or a coffee break to the more elaborate, such as sponsoring the shuttle buses that transport the attendees between their hotels and the show location. Some shows offer sponsorship packages at various levels, or a la carte. Packages include prominent advertising enticements: running a continuous video, corporate logo displayed in online and offline venues, virtual booth packages, etc. A la carte sponsorships run the gamut. Consider some of these, everything ranging from a Big Bash social event to badge inserts:

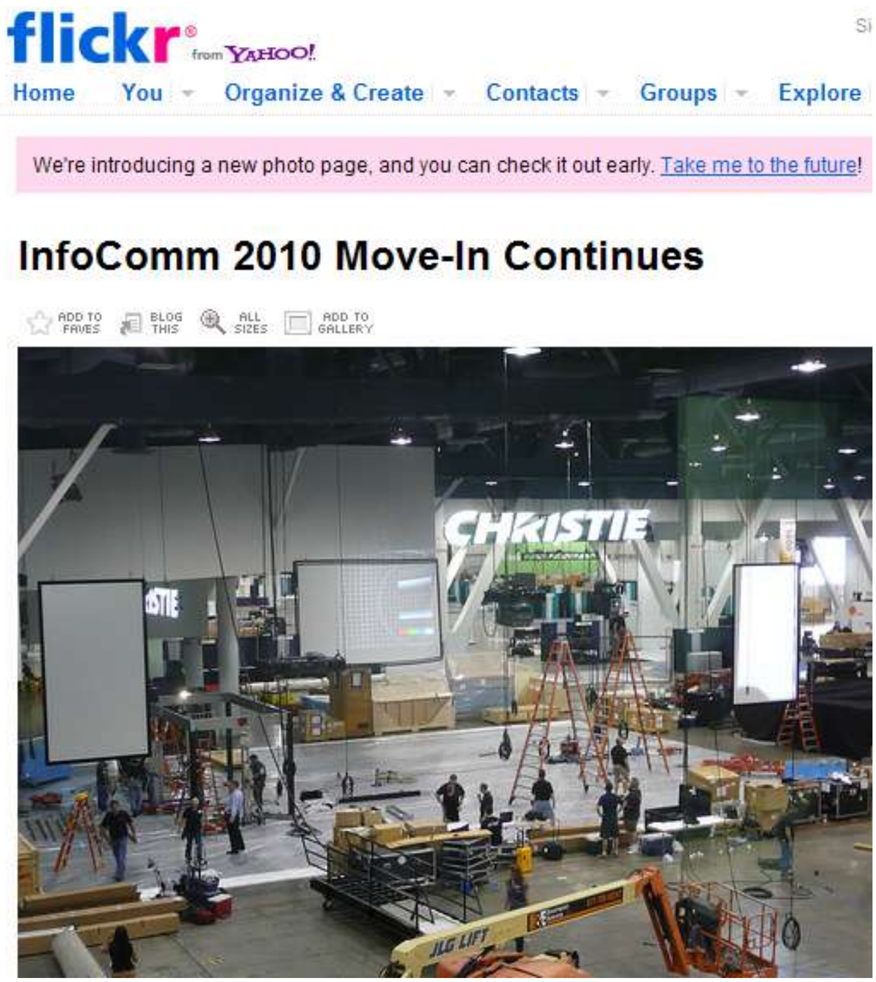
- Expo Party, Registration Opening Keynote
- Outside Banners, Aisle Banners, Bag Stuffers
- Badge Holder Insert, Attendee Badge Lanyard, Floor Graphics
- E-Minder E-Newsletter Sweepstakes
- Pens and Pads, Conference Tracks, Cyber Cafe
- Coffee Breaks, Welcome Reception, Core Sessions
- Visitor Lounge, New Product Showcase Demonstrations

PR, Print and Web Advertising

Event brochure: Direct mailing or electronic directories by show management to their huge, targeted attendee lists several months before the show can be an ideal solution of getting your name out. Usually a free company name listing, with paid advertising spots available as well.

Virtual booth packages: Your own web page on the show's website with a link to your company's website. Because your one-time cost covers nearly a year (pre-show through post-show), a Virtual Booth stands out as "one of the most cost-effective forms of advertising."

Website photo gallery: Some shows host an area on their website to display product photos, at no cost. Flickr is a great site where shows and as well as individuals upload their photos to share. Here is an example from InfoComm 2010 in Las Vegas:



Company Website: Your own company's website is definitely a great way to promote your exhibit and the show schedule, but best as an adjunct to other marketing mediums. It's not a plan by itself, in other words, only one element in the plan.

Press Releases – The event usually has a Press Center onsite where you can submit 25 – 30 media kits. Here are a few tips from the marketing manual from Diversified Business Communications:

> *Press kits are a one-stop source for the media to get information about your company and products….Information included in the kit should be kept simple and to the point – journalists are not interested in marketing materials; they are after hard news. The best kits are enclosed in a folder that is marked clearly on the outside with the company's name and booth number. Some members of the media prefer an electronic press kit – online or CD-ROMs…[with] news releases, photos with captions, your company logo, supporting literature, a technical specifications list and a business card or contact information.*

Besides supplying press kits, you might consider a press conference where you can discuss or demonstrate new research, products or technologies, or announce new executives to your management team and celebrity endorsements.

Getting the media's attention is definitely an art form worth cultivating. While the show management will often give you their list of contacts, I suggest using it as a foundation and work to compile your own comprehensive list of consumer and business media, especially on a local level.

PR for Your Show Efforts

I had met Nancy Trent at TS2 in 2009. After our meeting I asked her for material to use in my blog. She was very gracious to provide us with relevant information about PR and the world of trade shows. She discusses PR tips for both the attendee and the exhibitor. Here is the blog post:

> Trade shows are where new products are launched, concepts are introduced, trends are found, sales and contacts are made, networking is fostered, and business is set in motion. No matter what ends of the industry you're in, exhibitors, attendees, sponsors, and partners can all benefit from being media-savvy. Year-round publicity efforts can help trade show management companies increase awareness for each event, boost exhibitor and sponsor sales, promote sponsor and exhibitor loyalty, expand the audience and scope of the show, and can help build awareness for an entire industry.
>
> Expos and conference are the best opportunities for face-to-face selling, buying, networking and advancing their business. **Here are PR tips for attendees:**

Speak up! - Speaking opportunities are excellent publicity generators because they can enable you to obtain coverage among your peers and throughout the industry before, during and after your speech.

Make your trade show experience a social one - Most trade shows feature networking opportunities. Whether conducted by the show or affiliated organizations, these events provide a great opportunity to make new contacts in a more relaxed setting.

Be a trade show advisor - Frequently, trade shows welcome the participation of retailers on their advisory boards. Being on the board will provide you with the opportunity to expand your involvement and gain considerable visibility throughout the industry.

Trend Spotting- Be sure to set aside enough time for spotting the latest trends. Each of us develops our own forecasting techniques. We have our gurus who tell us what the general societal are and how they apply to our business. Strolling up and down the aisles can give you a good idea on how those trends are being translated.

Mobilizing Merchandise PR - Most products and services have a PR and/or marketing person/agency behind them. You need to learn how to get their share of this marketing potential. Use the trade show as an opportunity to see how you can garner product PR to spur sales and employ PR as an incentive for employees, partners and clients, as well as generate or spot trends, and capitalize on them.

Exhibiting at trade shows brings new leads, the chance to meet up with clients and catch up with old contacts. But in addition to sales and seminars, trade shows present many excellent publicity opportunities. **Here are five PR tips for exhibitors:**

Don't limit your time frame to the week of the trade show - Most trade shows are marketing to attendees year-round. Contact the show organizers to find out how you can get involved in joint promotions with top spas and buyers across the country. Always take advantage of pre-show marketing opportunities with the trade show. Check if the show has a newsletter, or press releases they send out periodically, and see if you can get your product included.

Time your news announcement with the trade show - Schedule new product introductions or a corporate announcement in sync with the show and prepare news releases about your activities. Contact trade magazines and daily newspapers with news about what you have planned for the event. If you have a visually stimulating product or demonstrations consider contacting local TV stations. Find out if the show is partnering with trade publications and be sure to target editors who will definitely be writing pre-show and post-show editions. Obtain a copy of the pre-registered media list. Send an informational letter, and try to arrange interviews for your spokesperson during the show. Include your booth number and Web site in press materials so they know where to find you before, during and after the event.

Get involved in the show's publicity efforts - Usually, trade shows have a press room. Any exhibitor who doesn't put materials in the press room is missing out on opportunities to obtain publicity. Contact the trade show publicity office and ask if you can contribute information on new products and trends. PR professionals are gathering information and insights for press materials and announcements to garner publicity for the show. They will appreciate your input and can increase your exposure.

Decorate your booth with publicity - Getting publicity for your company and its products is important, but knowing how to use publicity as a sales tool is an important part of effective marketing public relations. If your company was mentioned recently in an article, make sure it is visible at your booth, in the press room and even with your order sheets. Everyone wants to be associated with people or products they read about in the press. Publicity materials, such as article reprints, are especially useful as tools to help new or potential customers get to trust and know your company and your products.

Don't forget to follow-up - Half of the reason you attend trade shows is for leads and potential business. The same applies to future publicity. It's important to call or email editors you met at the show. Ask whether they have any questions for you or how you can help with their post show articles. Send a press kit consisting of press releases, facts and statistics, and bios of key team members. Continue to keep them updated between trade shows about your company, and send them a flow of story ideas to write about. Your goal is to become a resource for articles about the industry.

Nancy Trent is the founder and president of Trent & Company Marketing Communications.

Tips on Writing Your Show Message

If you have question on how to write the messages for your trade show audience here are some suggestions from an article by Mark S.A. Smith:

How to Write with Power

Whether you are writing copy for brochures, press releases, sales letters or the internet, here are six ideas that will give your writing pizzazz and sparkle.

1. Focus On Your Reader: Your reader always thinks, “So what?” or “Big deal!” or “What’s in it for me?” Use the powerful words “you” and “your” whenever possible.

2. Make Your Writing Exciting With Active Verbs: Look at the difference in the energy level of these sentences: “The discussion will be led by Joe.” “Joe will lead the discussion.” Which version has more life?

3. Put Your Reader in The Picture: Look for ways of writing your reader into the action. Instead of, “Thursday, Joe will lead the discussion,” try, “Join us on Thursday, as Joe leads the discussion.”

4. Start Paragraphs with Miniature Headlines: Pull your reader through your writing by making the beginning of each paragraph exciting and tantalizing.

5. Promise Your Readers Benefits: Change "So what?" to "Is that so!" with the promise of benefits. And follow through with the benefits.

6. KISS: Keep It Super Simple: Einstein pointed out, "Make everything as simple as possible, and not one bit simpler." When writing to inform or persuade, keep the vocabulary simple. This article checks in at the 8th grade level.

Direct Mail: Yes, it still works! Whether a flyer, postcard or letter, *this is the most important resource you can use to bring prospects and customers to your booth*. Incomm Research, an independent research company, identified the percentage of attendees influenced by particular pre-show promotions. They are:

- Personal letters with free passes 54%
- Fax or Email invitation 42%
- Personal phone call 37%
- General direct mail 16%

Shows generally offer some form of this, though I strongly encourage you to build your own direct mail campaign in conjunction with their offerings. Be sure to start early to create and implement your direct mail campaign, and to have your mailing designed and printed. Typically you need to begin mailing at least two months before the show.

One of our Sponsors, 4imprint, has a content rich Blue Paper on Direct Mail Marketing. It is not just for the trade show function but marketing in total. In fact, 4imprint has many Blue Papers which should be discover by this readership and they can be found here.

Show Postcard Sample

Below is an example of a postcard I received for TS2 a show for trade show people held in Boston July 13 – 15 2010. I have some comments to make - good and room for improvement comments.

First off – they sent something!! And their logo is eye-catching and appealing. When I see their booth on the show floor, I will remember their card. Now the room for improvement comment – they did not provide a compelling message to stop by and see them. Every marketer has to place themselves in the attendee's shoes and answer the question – what's in it for me? Why should I take the time and effort to stop by and visit your booth?

Broadcast E-Mail – These methods allow you to hone a message to your target market. One advantage with e-mail is you can create an ongoing dialogue with your customers and prospects. Please note: do not send out en masse – they will probably be filtered out and identified as spam or phishing, and automatically deleted. Certain words in particular, like “free,” are suspect and often moved to junk mail status. With either one, you can include VIP registration tickets. Most of all, keep your e-mails short and to the point. Written well, it's not only more compelling, but customers will be more likely to read them.

VIP campaign: Along with generalized direct mailings, I have discussed special treatment of your customers and/or VIPs at the beginning of this chapter. Again, I suggest a more specialized campaign specifically designed for a select group you have identified beforehand. These are your top prospects and, as such, get a more individualized and exclusive treatment. You may invite them to special receptions, events or meetings with executive management, both on the show site and off site. Some shows offer a Key Buyer Program for this purpose, so you don't always have to reinvent the wheel entirely. Check your Exhibitor's Manual for pricing.

Telemarketing: This step includes contacting by phone your best customers and important potential customers that you want to see at the show. I suggest having salespeople, top management executives, distributors, agents and other partners get involved with this activity. Taking the time to make personal contact has a whole new value with the advent of the Internet. Remember, as much as we've all become accustomed to doing things electronically, much of the business world is full of baby boomers that didn't grow up with it. A phone call can make the difference. Here are some telemarketing tips from Keith Reznick of Creative Training, in the marketing guide for Diversified Business Communications:

TELEMARKETING TIPS

- Have a reason for calling – update them on something new at your company or changes with their current suppliers.
- Invite them to meet someone in your booth they might not normally have a chance to meet with – an executive or technical expert.
- Schedule a time for them to see a demo in your booth.
- Invite them to your booth to receive a sample.

The bottom line is that the more ways you can invite your buyers to a show, the better. Say it in multiples – in person, email, phone, and fax. According to CEIR, this can increase your traffic at your booth by 50%. When possible, set an appointment, and then follow-up to remind them again before the show.

All of these marketing opportunities represent a valuable potential line of communication to your target market. The efforts you make to attract those quality buyers and prospects to your booth before the show will pay off.

USE THE SHOW'S PLATFORM TO EXTEND YOUR BRAND

As an exhibitor you should take advantage of all free and some paid offerings from a show. So many exhibitors do not and they are losing valuable exposure to their audiences.

Dave Lutz of the Velvet Chainsaw has written a blog post that every exhibitor needs to read and understand. It can have a direct impact on your experience and results from being an exhibitor at a show. The post was written for TSNN. Here is a portion of the post which is directed to exhibitors regarding driving traffic to your booth. The remaining part of his post was geared towards the show organizer.

> ***You've Got to Do More Than Just Show-up!***
>
> **Increase Your Online Exhibitor Presence, and You'll Increase Your Face-to-Face Show Traffic**
>
> Recently, I reviewed some very telling analytics from several of the largest tradeshows.
>
> **Here's what I learned:**
>
> 1. Exhibitors that completed an online booth profile received twice as many page views as those that didn't. Attendees also bookmarked them for an onsite visit.
>
> 2. Exhibitors that purchased online booth upgrades received four to five times more online views than those with basic listings.
>
> 3. Exhibitors with an online booth upgraded profile were added to an attendees' must-see expo list at a rate of five to six times more than those with less of an online presence.
>
> 4. Online featured exhibitors (those that purchased keywords or product categories) received online traffic that was two to three times greater than those that didn't opt for the up-sell.
>
> 5. The sooner an exhibitor completes their online booth profile, the better their results.

Having these numbers and examples should spur you to fill out the necessary forms and consider "upgrades" or enhanced listings to attract your audience.

This great advice is from Dave Lutz. All of the items he has mentioned would be in the Exhibitor Manual. Nowadays these manuals are electronic so you can access through a website.

THE OFTEN IGNORED EXHIBITOR MANUAL

While each show is unique, the Exhibitor's Manual will inform you about what kinds of support you can expect from show management. Keep notes for yourself as you compile your lists of activities – which activities are yours and which are theirs.

One of the most important pre-show activities is to read your Exhibitor's Manual, sometimes known as the Exhibitor's Package. Even though it may seem daunting (and therefore, easy to set aside), it's best to think of it like you would a letter from your attorney – read every word. Exhibitor's Manuals have all the details you will need to know. The size of the package will depend on the size of the show.

Often this task is delegated to a support person but that can be a poor decision. Some elements of the ordering can be support by a junior person, but the events manager should review the unique offerings the show has to offer and make a determination on what should be acted upon.

Your manual will contain all of the contracts for each contractor, their pricing schedule, and deadlines. Have a highlighter ready to note all the deadlines that pertain to you. Sign up early and keep a copy of all contract service order forms readily accessible. Bear in mind that each of these service contracts is with the individual contractor, and that signing up after a deadline means paying "Floor Prices," which, as you would suspect, equals higher costs.

The following is one of my blog posts written in the spring of 2010. It was my intent in writing this to highlight all the cost savings an exhibitor can experience if they get their orders in early.

> **What Lurks in the Exhibitor Manual?** Every trade show has one - the official exhibitor service manual. This manual is where an exhibitor can order all the necessary components for their booths. But there is more to those manuals [whether they are online or a physical manual].
>
> Far too often the very busy person in charge of the show puts off the task of tackling all the material inside the exhibitor manual or delegates it to an inexperience subordinate. And that decision can cost a company significant amount of money, as well as other preventable headaches at the show.

My advice - embrace your service manual

Normally the Exhibitor Services Manual has all the official material for a show including:

- General Information
- Promotional Opportunities
- Regulations
- Decorator Services
- Hotel and Travel
- Shipping and Material Handling
- Labor
- Exhibitor Appointed Contractors
- Utilities
- Badges and Registration

Let's explore - there are treasures to be found!!

Treasure # 1 - Savings

Who doesn't like to save money**?** Almost every service offered which is ordered ahead of time have some type of savings, 10 % - 20% - 30% and more.

Graphics and signs are especially costly if ordered at the last minute. In fact they can be 50% more costly!

Treasure # 2 - Promotional Opportunities

The show wants every exhibitor to promote themselves and has multiple offerings. Some are free and some have a price tag associated with them.

One main item is a listing in the Show's Exhibitor Directory. I have seen far too many exhibitors who provide the bare essentials and not take advantage of the additional space to describe their products and services. Sometimes long after a show is over, a prospect from the show is reviewing the material they received at the show. They might be looking for your company and what your product and/or service does but they have little or no information to go on - because you were too busy to fill out that form. So they move on to the competition because that company cared enough to have all the pertinent information available.

If a show offers free invitations for admission every exhibitor should take advantage of it. The pre-show mailing can have customers and prospects **destination bound** to see you at the show.

There are other opportunities like getting the post show attendee list, if you have filled out the proper forms before the show. The Exhibitor Service Manual can be a treasure trove of possibilities - if you take advantage of them!

Treasure # 3 - Peace of Mind

This wise advice was from the Exhibitor Show for 2010:

Who to Contact

> This information has been prepared as a service to you, the exhibitor. Direct, early contact with exhibition management can be the key to your success as an exhibit manager. Never hesitate to ask the obvious question, or call to verify conflicting information. Keep in mind that each question answered in advance is one less problem to be solved on-site.

So ask your questions - both the Show and the Official Services Contractor want to help you. It is in their best interest because a satisfied customer will most likely return next year.

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

Apple and other mobile device manufacturers have created a new industry – applications for their devices. And creativity in its finest from is now offering a plethora of apps. Even the event marketing world has hundreds of app for it.

The site Conventions.net has a great listing of event related apps. You can access them via this link. The screen shot below just show a portion of the offerings on that site.

www.conventions.net

LEAD RETRIEVAL FOR YOUR LEADS AT THE SHOW

Capturing the attendee's contact information and determining if they are a lead for you company is a daunting task. Many times leads are not followed up on after the show in part because the poor collection device [paper or electronic] used on the show floor.

A very robust discussion of the lead follow-up process is in Chapter Nine. But for our immediate discussion, I want to focus attention on how leads are capture on the show floor and other places show related [i.e. conference rooms, food courts, on a bus to and from the convention center, etc.].

DUMP THE FISH BOWL

Business cards just thrown into a fish bowl most often are a waste of time. Just anyone can place their card into the bowl to win your prize. Those cards need to be filtered and qualified before they can be determined if they are a lead or not.

ILEADS FROM BARTIZAN

A brand new lead retrieval app for Apple's products [iphone, iPad, iTouch] has been created by Bartizan. It is the first app to collect lead information not only on the show floor but anywhere one might initiate a discussion with a trade show attendee like the food court, standing in line, a conference session, the bus ride to or from the convention center, etc.

Lew Hoff, President of Bartizan has been my client for many years. And I was involved in the market evaluation research his firm conducted early last year to test this concept. I have a sense of ownership due to my involvement in his discover process. I marvel and watch the entrepreneurship in its finest as he created this product.

As the iLeads app was being developed, I wrote a blog post capturing Lew's vision of this product. There have been several noted industry gurus who have commented that this app is a "game changer". Let me share that blog post with you now:

> **NY Businessman Implodes Own Business Based on the iPhone and a Book: Behind the Cloud by Salesforce.com**
>
> Lew's Story
>
> After forty years of success in business, it can be a daunting challenge to see your business differently. Yet now, more than ever, the future of any company boils down to innovation and differentiation.
>
> In our case, that meant imploding on purpose - a radical recasting.

This is precisely what began to happen one November evening last year after I read (in one sitting), "*Behind the Cloud: The Untold Story of How Salesforce.com Went from Idea to Billion-Dollar Company-and Revolutionized an Industry*" by Marc Benioff.

A bit of context: At that time my companies, Bartizan Corporation and Bartizan Connects, had an established tenure of success - 40 years as a manufacturer of credit card equipment and 20 years producing electronic data collection equipment for use by trade show exhibitors – but we were in the middle of a major product change.

iLeads, our new trade show lead retrieval system, was largely the result of my exposure to two technological advances: the iPhone and Salesforce.com. It was starting to take shape and we were making good progress. However, my enthusiasm for iLeads was not universally shared within the company. There was a fear that our equipment inventory, which was viewed as our major asset, would become obsolete if iLeads was a success.

My response was, "That's what we want to do. I want Bartizan, not a competitor, to make our equipment obsolete!"

I wasn't getting much buy-in. If anything, iLeads was seen as a threat and was met with a great deal of internal resistance.

But after ordering Behind the Cloud for all key staff to read, a remarkable change in attitude happened almost immediately. It provided just the inspiration and impetus needed to push the iLeads project to completion.

Apps are the Future

"Apps are becoming the norm for how people quickly and easily access the information they want. People are used to getting information on demand," says Alan Hall, Technology Communications Manager for the Ford Motor Company. Today, there are over 140,000 iPhone apps with over 3 billion downloads – this is where the growth is.

So in order to get in the game, we had to move ourselves out of the equipment business and go to another level.

As an app, available at participating trade shows, iLeads allows businesses to confront a huge problem they face each time they exhibit at an event: lead follow-up.

The Issue of Lead Follow-Up

Remarkably, over 70 percent of all trade show leads are not followed up even once, according to the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR).

In another study by MillerPierce, it was found that:

- 15% of closed leads want to be contacted immediately by the sales team
- 30% of non-purchasers will be ready to buy in six to nine months

  Much of the problem is attributable to the process of collecting and managing leads. On average, more than 50% of all exhibitors do not use electronic lead retrieval.

For some, it is the perceived cost, although generally the rental cost of a lead retrieval terminal works out to much less than one-percent of a company's total cost of exhibiting. More often, exhibitors are put off by other factors. For example, the operation of a lead retrieval terminal is often not intuitive. In addition, in order to take advantage of its features, instruction is required – and sales people are at a trade show to sell, not learn how to operate a piece of equipment that they may never encounter again.

In order to prioritize leads and follow them up effectively, it is essential to do more than simply scan a visitor's badge. Each lead must be qualified, either by using the terminal's standard lead qualifiers or, better yet, through the use of custom qualifiers. Notes, either text or voice, should be appended to leads.

Typically, leads that have not been qualified are not followed up…which can mean lost sales.

If all leads are created equally, that is, without qualifiers, the following generally occurs:

- A salesperson is handed 100 or more leads and told to follow-up. The first 30 calls net the salesperson mostly voice mail or "not interested as the only response."
- Will the salesperson make call number 31? Probably not.

Instead the remaining leads are placed in a desk drawer for follow-up "next week," which morphs into next month, at which point they are dismissed as "old" leads.

I once asked the president of a California electronics manufacturer if his tiny booth at the huge CeBIT trade show in Hannover, Germany was worth the investment. He raved about how they got over 300 leads - although it turned out that the leads were never followed up.

"You see", he explained, "after ten days in Germany, when we got back to San Diego, messages and work had really piled up. By the time we got out from under, a couple of months had passed. The leads were pretty stale. But next time…."

Oops. Someone forgot to tell him a 2010 world is going to be different – he may not get a next time.

Exhibitors fail to embrace electronic lead retrieval for many reasons:

It is not particularly easy to use.

- Rental terminals vary from one event to the next, making it difficult to develop a familiarity with the technology.
- Rental terminals are typically distributed only an hour or two prior to the start of an event, leaving little time to get acquainted with a unit's features.
- Most systems depend on scanning an attendee's badge containing a 2-dimensional bar code, a system subject to many error-inducing variables.
- Exhibitors generally have to stand in line to not only collect their rented lead retrieval device prior to the start of an event, but also wait in line again at the event's conclusion to return the equipment.

These factors, rather than cost, have inhibited the use of electronic lead retrieval, which in turn has diminished the results that exhibitors obtain from their trade show investment.

The Future is Here

Forming relationships with existing and potential customers is at the heart of a company's business. Supplying an endless stream of customers is the underpinning of future success.

Lead follow-up is not a luxury anymore – it is a necessity to the vital operation of business in a fast, and sometimes abruptly changing climate – and iLeads helps you do it instantly with immediate customer interaction and involvement.

By using the iPhone and iPod Touch in conjunction with cloud computing, iLeads also eliminates the friction (shipping costs, staffing, capital investment, maintenance and availability) generated by dedicated lead retrieval terminals - including those manufactured and marketed by Bartizan.

There is no point in ignoring the handwriting on the wall.

We are anticipating integrating iLeads with Salesforce.com. This project is under way using a Salesforce-recommended third-party developer. The combination of

Salesforce.com and iLeads is compelling for exhibitors and the reaction to iLeads introduction has been enthusiastic.

Like Benioff describes in his book, we had our own "incredible awakening" one night and, as a result, at Bartizan, we have started our own revolution in the exhibition world.

Back to Joyce - Lew is a visionary and I believe this will be a game changer for our industry. For those who might want to contact Lew, his email is lew [at] bartizan [dot] com.

Lew has successfully launched the first iPhone app on April 1, 2010 and it has been used in many shows with great enthusiasm from exhibitors!!

ONE OF THE FIRST APP STORIES

In fact at one show Microsoft rented three iTouch's from Bartizan. Once returned the iLeads information was erased so it could be rented again. Lew noticed that there were over 1,000 leads on one of the iTouch's and that particular person had added notes to more than 90% of the leads. So they were gathering rich information which could be transferred into their CRM system and better qualify the leads.

Now you tell me, which lead will get more attention from a field person – one with the bare necessities or one that is loaded with additional information? We all know the better we can equip the follow-up process with robust information the better our chances are on moving that prospect to the next spot in the sales cycle.

Lead Retrieval?

Available on the iPhone App Store

We have an App for you.

Capture, qualify and manage tradeshow leads anywhere with an iPhone, iPad or iPod touch

iLeads is a new and better way to collect data and exchange information. It is the most cost effective and easiest to use lead retrieval solution. Unlike traditional lead retrieval, iLeads makes adding notes and qualifiers easier than ever. This helps exhibitors identify their best prospects during and after the show. There is no barcode required, eliminating common barcode headaches. The app is available now for a free download and test drive at the iTunes store.

The Most Complete Lead Retrieval Solution. iLeads is the world's first and *only* Lead retrieval App.

Contact us: (800) 899-2278

BARTIZAN CONNECTS

217 Riverdale Ave. Yonkers, NY 10705 • info@bartizan.com • www.bartizan.com • (800) 899-2278

Available on the App Store

AN iLEADS TESTIMONIAL

Bartizan is getting rave reviews from their customers who are using iLeads. Here is one:

> "Using the iLeads lead retrieval was so easy. It was nice not to have to bother the attendees by scanning them. It was great to be able to have a co-worker have a discussion with the attendee and one of us could just type in the assigned number of the attendee and without bothering that person on trying to scan a couple of times. I have been doing events for 20 years and this has to be one of the best systems I have ever used. Most of the lead retrieval systems are bar code scans or magnetic stripe and most of the times it takes 2 - 3 attempts to get the lead information. It would be so easy if all events large or small would go to this type of lead retrieval system, I am sure that 90% of the exhibitors and attendees would also like to see this. I look forward to seeing your iLeads system at future shows."
>
> — *Brian Rufiange Events Manager at Stratus Computers*

The following is from the Bartizan blog (September 3, 2010) about the success they had at ASAE.

> ***iLeads Lead Retrieval App a Success at ASAE 2010 Annual Meeting***
>
> Last month, iLeads was offered to exhibitors to use at ASAE & The Center's Annual Meeting & Expo in Los Angeles, California. We were thrilled with the response. ASAE show organizers offered **iLeads** to exhibitors on their order forms and many exhibitors chose to purchase a license and use iLeads at their booth.
>
> Exhibitors loved how easy it was to capture and qualify leads with notes and surveys, they also liked the ability to collect leads anywhere and anytime during the show, at dinners, parties and even the airport! Many exhibitors already had iPads at their booths so it just made sense to buy the iLeads license.
>
> Combined with the most popular business and social networking apps, iLeads has become the starting point for a powerful, integrated lead generation and follow-up system.
>
> Show management appreciated the substantially lower operating costs – no shipping, no on-site techs, no training, and equipment maintenance costs are eliminated. iLeads does not require a bar-coded badge, saving time and money and eliminating common bar code complications.

APPLE’S PRODUCTS: IPADS, ITOUCHES, IPHONES

Bartizan has embraced the entire platform of Apple’s products for the iLeads application. Now one day in the future this application will be on other platforms, but for today Bartizan owns the day on the Apple platform.

CONCLUSION

One more time the detail of the planning process has been highlighted in this chapter. It takes a village to get ready for any event. Make sure you are enlisting the necessary support from other marketing groups within your organization and most important the sales organization. It is paramount to have them involved in the planning process to ensure the fulfillment after the show. We will talk more about that in Chapter Nine.

Check out the Let’s Talk Trade Shows website for
free and paid webinar education.

http://www.letstalktradeshows.com/webinars-2/

Chapter Five – Enticing and Enhancing the booth experience

This chapter covers several main topics revolving around your booth. It starts with booth environment and finishes with giveaways. As we just learned in the previous chapter the "experience" you are creating via the booth and its personnel will have a lasting impact. The booth visitors will have either a favorable impression of you and want to continue the dialogue started in the booth, or they will find your competitor more appealing. Your goal is to capture the attention of your prospects and customers so that they will buy from you.

Skyline Exhibits and Booth Design

Storytelling is an aspect that is woven throughout the design of your booth, your marketing message at the show and beyond. So what story are you captivating the audience with as they walk by? You have only a few seconds to grab their attention and draw them into the booth to uncover who you are and what you have to offer.

Can your presence on the show floor amid all the other exhibitors with their noises, sights and sounds be sufficient to establish your brand and your message? It is a huge challenge undertaken every day on a show floor. There are booths that are truly winners, and then others who I would categorize as being at [military term] parade rest. They are there but could have done some routine activities and have gotten the attention of the crowd.

In the planning process for your trade show calendar, most companies review their booth properties. Do they have the correct booth properties or should a new one be designed?

Skyline Exhibits is one of the Sponsors of this eBook. The following material has been created by them for your review.

7 Big Hairy Exhibit Design Questions

In designing an exhibit that fits your needs, you have to ask a lot of questions. Here are 7 essential questions - and why they matter.

1. What kind of image do you want to convey?

Your exhibit conveys your company's personality - worthwhile because it creates an emotional reaction with your customers, and people buy for emotional reasons. The shapes, materials, surface treatments, colors, images, and even typography you choose help convey your company image. A company that wants a high-tech, innovative look will end up with a completely different exhibit than one that seeks a professional, established image.

2. What are you trying to accomplish?

Believe it or not, your objectives can dictate the actual shape of your exhibit. If you want to generate a lot of leads, you need an open, inviting space that allows easy entry for attendees and open sightlines for booth staffers. On the other hand, if you're looking to build relationships with a select number of key individuals, then you need an exhibit with conference rooms where you can spend quality time closing sales. Two different objectives, two radically different exhibit designs. Exhibitors that want to build their image tend to go for bigger graphic images and larger architectural elements to create a bigger impression.

3. What booth sizes are right for you?

Many companies use several booth sizes - island exhibits for their national shows, and then inline exhibits for their regional or vertical market shows. With foresight and planning, exhibitors can design one large exhibit that can be reconfigured for their smaller booth spaces. Not only do they save money by not having to purchase multiple exhibit properties, but they also present a more consistent look at all their shows.

4. How can you stretch your exhibiting budget?

Everyone wants the Taj Mahal. Yet everyone must come up with a justifiable budget. Balancing those needs is the goal of every exhibit designer. Choose compact, lightweight exhibit materials to deliver an effective exhibit that still saves clients thousands of dollars in operating costs compared to traditional custom exhibits. For some exhibitors who need to preserve capital or only exhibit in a big space once a year, rental exhibits help maximize the budget. And reconfigurable components let exhibitors create many exhibits from one.

5. What matters to your target audience?

Answer this question, and then make sure that's what you're showing on your exhibit. You'll get to what matters by determining the benefits your clients are seeking and then what your key advantages are. It can take a lot of discussion to arrive at this, starting with what your products are, moving to their features, then the benefits of these features, until you distill the message down to the key benefits that drive your buyers' purchasing decisions.

6. What message do you want your visitors to get in the first three seconds? And what do you want them to remember after visiting your booth?

Do you want them to remember your new products? Your competitive advantage? Or your company's brand image? Keep it simple. Designers who are used to creating brochures or ads have a tendency to overload exhibit graphics with way too much information to be effective in a trade show exhibit. Think billboard, not bulletin board. It's better to go for impact -- less is definitely more in trade show exhibit copy.

7. What functional needs do you have?

In creating an exhibit, you're also creating a temporary workspace for your booth staffers. What are their needs? You may need to create areas for demos, presentations, conferences, and storage. And still balance that with your need to create an accessible exhibit with graphic messages.

Is There a New Booth on the Horizon?

Once the questions above are answered, you might want to consider a new booth property. Michael Thimmesch, Director of Lead Generation and Industry Relations Skyline Exhibits, wrote this blog post [May 16, 2010] below about the many reasons a company would want to consider a new booth. It can be helpful for you to review and assess if you might have a reason or two to consider a new structure for an upcoming show.

15 Reasons To Buy A New Trade Show Display

At your last few trade shows you've had a nagging feeling that something was not quite right with your booth - before you realized it was the booth itself. While your booth once was acceptable, it's just not doing its job anymore. But why?

Perhaps one or more of these 15 reasons will give voice to your growing frustration:

1. Your current trade show display is worn out. An old exhibit held together with duct tape and bailing wire, plus scarred with dents, scratches, kinks and stains doesn't favorably represent your organization and its reputation. A battered booth deters potential visitors, and might make your booth staffers want to wear paper bags over their heads.

2. You have a new marketing message. Whether it's from a recent rebranding, a hot new product to launch, or a new vertical market you are entering, your trade show exhibit no longer matches how your

Exhibits Designed to Appeal, Designed to Perform

Get a Big Brand Presence and Big Results

Skyline exhibits are designed to meet your objectives and exceed your expectations. We'll transform your brand into an effective marketing environment with exhibit design that is both creative and functional. And, we handle all the details with quality turnkey service locally and globally.

Skyline custom modular exhibit systems are smartly designed to look great, but also to pack small and light – reducing costs and maximizing ROI. Our legendary portable displays are built to perform show after show.

Visit us online to access helpful exhibitor education materials, informative white papers or just to see what's new. We continually develop new products intent on optimizing your event marketing results.

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corporate image is portrayed on your website or marketing collateral. In the name of integrated marketing, you've got some booth buying to do.

3. You need a bigger trade show booth. You want to make a bigger impression and have a bigger footprint to harvest more opportunity. You need more room for meetings, demos, presentations, and storage. So you want to test out a wider inline or a larger island trade show exhibit, either renting the extra components to add to what you already own, or starting over completely.

4. You need a smaller trade show display. Your budget is more limited than it once was, and so you want to exhibit in smaller spaces to also lower your operating costs. Or, you've decided to go to a higher number of smaller shows instead of fewer larger shows, and need a new smaller booth that will still let you look like a leader.

5. You need another trade show exhibit for international shows. Your company is reaching out to overseas markets to benefit from their larger share of global GDP and faster projected growth rates. Rather than ship your exhibit overseas and back, you want a dedicated trade exhibit (perhaps called a stand or a kiosk) stored "over there." (Want help with international exhibiting? Click here for a 24-page white paper.)

6. You are doing more shows than one display can handle. As you find more good shows to exhibit at, some are either scheduled at the same time as an established show in your schedule, or too close to allow time for shipping and set up. Consider two design levels of displays, to match different levels of trade shows. Also consider exhibit rental.

7. You need a second portable trade show display for your dealers or field sales. Your field offices or dealers keep asking you to send out a display for their local events. It's great they want to promote your company and products, and they are even willing to pay for the booth space and staff the booth. Give them a durable, easy to set up display with graphics consistent with your approved marketing messages.

8. You are new to exhibiting and need your first trade show exhibit. You've started a new company and want to make a splash introducing yourself and your new product at a trade show. Or your company has been around a while, but you want to finally tap into the marketing power of trade shows to meet many, many prospects face- to-face in a short amount of time. Your first exhibit may be a rental.

9. Your shipping company lost your trade show display. People make mistakes, even people who work at shipping companies. So when your display goes astray, your shipping company will step up to pay for your replacement. No one said you have to get the exact same display. You can update the look, message, functionality, and get what you really want now.

10. You saw an exhibit you REALLY liked at a trade show. It was love at first sight. You loved its color, lines, and shape. You loved how it quickly grabbed your attention, and invited you in for a closer look. Now you want to chuck your current dull exhibit in the trash, because you now know what is truly possible. Ah, amour.

11. Your company was in a merger or acquisition. Your company has bought, been bought, or merged with another company. You may have been both exhibiting at the same shows, but now you need to exhibit together in one, presumably larger exhibit. Your new exhibit has the balancing act of reflecting the new position of this new, third company, created by the combination of the previous two.

12. Your current trade show display no longer fits your needs. Over the last several years your exhibiting strategy has changed, and so have the activities you hold in your booth. Perhaps you are no longer giving presentations, even though your booth has space for that. Or you want to hold more private meetings, but your booth is wide open. For whatever reason, you need a new exhibit that work with you, not against you.

13. Your current trade show exhibit is too hard to set up. You bought your last booth strictly for pizzazz, but the only sparks you get are from your field sales people every time they have to set it up. Or you bought a monumental traditional custom exhibit, but the 5-figure I&D bill every show has wreaked havoc on your budget. You now crave a booth that is easier, and cheaper, to set up.

14. Your current trade show exhibit is too heavy. Your portable display is actually too heavy to carry, so you'd prefer a back wall made of three banner stands. Or, perhaps you've got an island exhibit like the exhibitor we just met, who recently bought a $250,000 traditional custom exhibit, only to shelve it after one show because its shipping, drayage and I&D bills were so high. Now you want custom modular exhibits that give a similar look but weigh 60% less, plus significantly lower your carbon footprint.

15. Our existing trade show exhibit isn't flexible enough. Don't always get the same-sized booth space, but your current exhibit really only fits well in one booth size. You'd rather be able to use just one library of exhibit components for multiple booth sizes, and be able to easily change out graphics for different divisions, vertical markets, or products.

If you've been able to defer purchasing a new trade show display for a long time and conserve your cash, good for you. But if multiple items on this list have hit home, perhaps it's time to look into how a new exhibit can help you enhance your corporate image, better achieve your marketing goals, and lower your operating costs.

One of these points might have struck a cord, and now you might want to evaluate the necessity of a new booth property. Or as you are planning for 2011 and beyond, you know you will need a different look and feel to match a change in your marketing message.

Skyline Exhibits Case Study

I have asked Michael to share a success story with us and he has provided the following:

For making attendees feel like they were taking a plunge in a giant tube waterslide, the SplashTacular® Entertainment exhibit won the Best of Show award at the 2009 World Waterpark Association (WWA) Symposium & Trade Show.

SplashTacular, the largest U.S.-based waterslide manufacturer, received the award for displaying the greatest originality, creativity and impact with its tradeshow exhibit.

"The SplashTacular Entertainment booth was outstanding–truly one-of-a-kind and every bit deserving of this annual honor," says Patty Miller, WWA director of supplier relations.

The SplashTacular exhibit also received the Best Exhibitor Award in its category at the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions Expo in Las Vegas.

Not bad for a company that previously caused few ripples with an inconspicuous rental booth. "With our old exhibit, people would ask what we do," recalls B.J. Johnson, SplashTacular's trade show and marketing coordinator.

Skyline Exhibits designed the new 20'-by-30' exhibit to leave obscurity in its wake. "Our goal was to have a booth that truly reflects what we do," Johnson says. "This is an extremely fun industry, and this exhibit screams that we do waterslides."

Three cylindrical structures mimic the shape of a tube slide. To simulate water flowing through the tube, LED projectors beam a watery pattern overhead on the blue liner. Monitors show video of the company's rides in action.

"It's an 'experience' booth," Johnson says. "The design grabs attention and gets people to come inside, giving us an opportunity to walk them through the company and our new products."

Meanwhile, the lightweight, easy-to-assemble exhibit has slashed operating costs for SplashTacular. The new booth can be assembled in a half-day, compared to 2 1/2 days for the old booth.

Because the lightweight exhibit packs into two compact containers, the company could afford to expedite shipping for a tight show schedule. Johnson says that was never an option with the heavy, bulky rental booth: “Freight costs alone were a huge expense for us in our old booth.”

Conclusion

In this section, there were great questions which should aid you in your overall booth design process. Having the correct display normally enables an exhibitor to stand out from the crowd. Augment the display with other proven pre-show, at show and post show tactics and you have a winning combination. In the chapters of this eBook, there are thorough discussions of all aspects of marketing for your next successful event.

The Booth Environment

Even though I cannot stress enough the importance of the face-to-face conversation, other elements can be used to engage their emotions in other ways, particularly their unconscious. You can positively and subtly influence them if you capture their attention and engage other senses. For example, consider the impact of color.

Colors that Sell

By Suzanne Roman

Color is a powerful psychological trigger. It creates strong emotions that can sometimes mean the difference between losing or making a sale. Here are the associations people make with certain colors.

REDS: love, warmth, excitement, passion, food.

BLUES: power professionalism, trustworthiness, calmness.

GREENS: nature, life and money.

ORANGES: affordability, creativity, fun, youth.

PURPLES: royalty, luxurious, fantasy, and dreams.

Each color has negative and positive associations with them so you should use colors in your designs in a way that steers the mind of the viewer towards the positive associations rather than the negative ones.

In a blog post I wrote for The International Center for Exhibitor and Event Marketing [www.iceem.net] I highlighted a 4imprint Blue Paper regarding color. The following is the post from August 23, 2010.

In our industry color plays an important role in the communication process. In the sea of booths at exhibitions, color can be used to pull the attendees attention towards your booth. **4imprint** writes Blue Papers which contain exceptional material on many topics. They have these Blue Papers on their site [look at the bottom of the landing page].

Today I want to highlight a few key points from 4imprint's Blue Paper on color. Its title is: *Give a Hue! Color Marketing and Consumer Behavior*. The Blue Paper raises some issues which can have a direct impact on your booth design and associated marketing materials.

The Blue Paper starts with this important fact:

According to the Institute for Color Research, people make initial judgments about a product within 90 seconds of their first interaction with it, and between 62% and 90% of that assessment is based on color alone. Choose poorly, and that initial assessment can be a harsh one.

The impact for you and your presence at a show – choose the wrong color scheme and potential customer might pass you by.

Statistics on Color

The Blue Paper notes some statistics from the Color Marketing Group. This organization "is the premier international association for color design professionals. Our mission is to create color forecast information for professionals who design and market color. We are "the" place for color info exchange." In the Blue Paper, 4imprint says:

The Color Marketing Group (CMG) is perhaps the world's leading color forecaster. This not-for-profit international association has more than 1,000 members from a wide cross section of industries. The CMG holds twice annual conferences to predict color trends for consumer and contract products. The objective is to help its members maximize sales and profits through optimum color selection. As past CMG president Charles Smith once remarked, "If it's the right color, it sells, and if it's the wrong color, it's inventory."

Here are some of their statistics:

Need more evidence that color choice makes a difference? Consider these statistics from the Color Marketing Group:

• Color increases brand recognition by up to 80%.

• Color improves readership as much as 40%.

• Color ads are read up to 43% more than similar ads in black and white.

• Color can account for up to 85% of the reason people decide to buy.

Humans can only process a limited number of stimuli at one time. In order for an object or communication to get noticed, it must catch our eye. Color plays a critical role in drawing the eye and attracting our attention.

The Blue Paper continues with this story of Apple's color introduction on their computers.

> Perhaps there's no better example of color's impact on sales than the August 1998 launch of the teal iMac®. Consumers bought up more than 800,000 machines in less than five months, and by January of 1999, Apple had launched five more fruity colors in blueberry, grape, tangerine, lime and strawberry.
>
> "Using color boldly and wisely can grab consumers' attention and boost a company's reputation for innovation," said Pantone's Leatrice Eiseman.
>
> At least one manufacturer in the PC market had been considering colored computers several years before Apple launched its bright palette. In 1996, Zilba Design, Inc., a company that designed for Hewlett-Packard, asked Eiseman for color recommendations. She suggested a turquoise color—only slightly different from the iMac's® teal launch. HP rejected it, and any colors, because they felt there wouldn't be a market demand. Arguably, that teal color launch set off a series of marketing innovations that the PC market has still to overcome.
>
> "Color is often the one thing that will pull people in a particular direction," said Eiseman. "They will choose it simply because the color speaks to them. The color gives them the message of what the product is all about."

To obtain a full copy of the Blue Paper, click on this link.

A COMFY EXPERIENCE

The Experiential Chapter covered several vital components which create an overall impression or experience. Now in this section we will explore additional elements.

While making sure your booth is attractive and exciting, don't forget to make it comfortable. Trade shows tend to have long days of walking, standing and over-stimulation. Anything you can do to create a welcome respite for customers helps in your efforts to create a favorable impression. These tips are from the *Gourmet Housewares New Exhibitor Survival Guide*:

THE 5 BASIC RULES OF BOOTH DESIGN:

1. **Sight:** Use Fire-Resistant cloth, display company logo, arrange goods in groups or model your own goods. Wear a welcoming smile!
2. **Touch:** Be sure your merchandise can be touched. Use interesting and soft flooring.
3. **Taste:** Offer hard candies or give out food – especially if you sell food items. (But first, check rules about sampling!)
4. **Smell:** Spray your booth with a subtle classic perfume or place potpourri in and around your space.
5. **Sound:** Introduce soft music in your booth.

You've invested the company energies and resources over time to make this show happen. You've done everything you possibly could to attract your exact target market to your exhibit booth.

Now in the "smell" category, in the *Exhibitor Magazine* article, "What's That Smell?" from December 2009, they following strategies were given:

> **Scent Strategies:** There are four main scent-marketing strategies that you can use to add an aromatic appeal to your next exhibit.
>
> **Billboard Smell:** Often food-related, this approach saturates a space with scent that extends far outside it, reaching out over the football-field-like expanse of a trade show floor to attendees who otherwise might not be able to see your booth — but can smell it a mile away.
>
> **Thematic Smell:** Thematic smell is used to complement your exhibit's mood or décor. If your booth's message to customers is to relax, for example, you might use scents associated with calmness, such as vanilla or lavender. If you were selling a product that protected them — e.g., safes or firearms — you might choose smells often associated with alertness, such as citrus or peppermint.
>
> **Ambient Smell:** More functional than promotional, this approach is the exhibit equivalent of a public restroom air freshener to keep the funk of sweaty attendees in a small space to a minimum. Or, if you're displaying equipment in your booth that gives off a fume-like odor, you might choose to camouflage that scent to keep it from repelling passersby.
>
> **Signature Smell:** Signature smells are individual scents developed specifically for and used exclusively by one company to convey a brand's "feel" to customers. Generally a mix of scents, they're most familiarly experienced in department stores and hotels such Harrods Ltd., which wafts a lime-and-basil scent through its entrances that suggests tweedy elegance.

Evaluate your current booth properties against these points outlined above to determine what adjustments could be made to have a greater impact on the show floor.

BOOTH TRAINING

To be blunt, this moment you have been waiting for – why waste it?

The bestselling book, Blink: *The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, by Malcolm Gladwell, informs us: "A person watching a silent two-second video clip of a teacher he or she has never met will reach conclusions about how good that teacher is that are very similar to those of a student who has sat in the teacher's class for an entire semester. That's the power of our adaptive unconscious."

Considering the implications of this in trade show terms, here are some items to be aware of in working with buyers and prospects in your exhibit and creating the best possible impression.

We know that most attendees come to the show with an agenda, and use the time to evaluate vendors before making a final decision. When a buyer is in the information-gathering mode, as is generally the case at an event, there is a relatively small window of opportunity to grab their attention. What happens is they use this time to count in and leave out suppliers based upon their experience in the booth with them.

Let's suppose an attendee goes to your competitor's booth – a vendor he/she had wanted to check out – and is not paid attention to or is brushed off by their personnel. He now wanders down to another vendor that was not on his list and is given the royal treatment at their booth. It is an easy choice at this point, and where a good "pick-up line" could come in handy. (By the way, do you know what yours is?)

If you compare a trade show to a movie, then what you've been doing so far is writing the script and acting as the producer at the same time. Now it's time to make the film, so to speak – and the camera is on your exhibit. Who's the most important part of the movie at this point? The actors…or, as you know them, your staff.

> *YOU are your company's most important part of the whole trade show effort. That's why it is important to understand your role and your company's role in this unique marketing environment. People want to talk to people. Prospects want to shake your hand, look you in the eye and believe they can trust you (and your company) to deliver what you promise. At a show, You are Your Company….The most expensive show you can do is the one where your exhibit does not arrive. Or you are stuck in a corner, behind a post, in the auxiliary hall. While it is very important getting visitors to your booth, the design and location will not write an order.*

Your product or service may be hot; the newest thing on the market, but it will not sell itself no matter how much you think it will. Literature, demos and samples are important in furthering the sales process, but people are necessary to answer questions and provide assurance of quality.

Your staff should be like professional actors who know their lines inside and out, and focus all their energies on the particular character they portray – and most importantly, on the potential client or customer that's in your booth. I say this because we have all been at shows where the sales people are doing one of the following: huddled together in an intimate conversation between themselves complaining about working the weekend, how tired their feet are, how slow the show is, what a rotten location they have and, my favorite, how hung-over they are from last night's vendor reception turned all-night bar hopping. Those 8 am call times can be a nightmare for the party animal! Susan Friedmann talks more about this topic below in the "Avoiding Bad Booth Personnel" section.

ACTING LESSONS: TRADE SHOW PROFESSIONAL

The following material should be reviewed by your booth staff as they prepare to be "on stage" and engage your future customers.

- Basic etiquette skills – no gum chewing, answering or playing with your new cell phone, or eating food. Save multi-tasking for the office.
- "Look 'em straight in the eye" when communicating – don't get distracted by others in the booth or walking by.
- Have a pad of paper and take notes while you're listening – it will show the customer you care enough to remember what you actually

discussed. It also helps to transcend a universal human trait – we tend to remember what we want to remember.

- Don't gossip or knock the competition – ever. If your product or service is really that good, you don't have to.
- Use the Fibonacci rule to your advantage – apply a 2/3 listening to 1/3 talking ratio. Anything that works that beautifully for Mother Nature will undoubtedly work wonders for you, too.
- Offer benefits over features for emotional impact.
- Acknowledge someone who stops at your booth right away. If you are with another customer, let them know you will be with them as soon as possible. Don't ignore them, but don't leave your current customer, either. Sometimes it can work out to include them.
- Don't judge by appearances – you never know who you might be talking to.
- Only speak the truth – that which you can confirm, whether you are talking numbers, or other information. Avoid sentences that begin with, "They say…" or "Everybody…." Very few people actually know "everybody," except teenagers who, of course, not only know "everybody," but, apparently, everything about them.

The idea when you have a live human being is to interact with them, and there's no better place to do it than a trade show or event. Booth dialogue has different and distinct aspects that must be covered in specific training for each show for it to be effective. You want to think in terms of creating an experience which will translate into a positive emotional connection.

Avoiding Bad Booth Personnel

Susan Friedmann, The Trade Show Coach has written a blog post about selecting the correct booth workers. It is a critical decision for each exhibitor to have the correct people on the show representing the company in a proper fashion.

> ***3 Ways to Keep Bad Booth Staffers Away From Your Next Tradeshow***
>
> Last week we talked about the sinister body language habits your booth staff may be exhibiting. This, as we mentioned may well add a negative to your company and brand image, however, a bad booth staffer can be the worst thing that ever happened to your trade show.
>
> That being the case, here's the top three things you need to do to avoid bringing them in the first place:
>
> **1. Understand the Environment**
>
> Tradeshow exhibiting is not like selling, in the field or otherwise. There is no single professional experience in the average salesperson's day that compares with being 'on' for eight to ten hours at a go, dealing with thousands of people. Be realistic when selecting staffers for this challenging environment: the shy technical type who hates to speak up in a sales meeting is NOT going to do well when confronted with herds of attendees.
>
> **2. Ask Questions**
>
> Many employers view tradeshow participation as a kind of perk — but for the employees who actually have to work the exhibit, they're anything but. Ask your potential staffers if they want to go to the show. You might discover that they don't want to go for personal or professional reasons. If at all possible, you don't want staffers at the show who don't want to be there.
>
> **3. Expect Consistency**

Be realistic when considering booth staffers. If you know Bob is a hard-core party animal with an eye for the ladies at home, he's going to be a hard-core party animal with an eye for the ladies when he's not home. If Sheila has a short temper and doesn't suffer fools gladly, she's not going to magically transform into sweetness and light because you're at the event.

In short, pick staffers who have a proven track record of handling high stress environments and remaining pleasant. It's an added bonus if they want to be at the show: enthusiasm and excitement are powerful selling tools.

Please consider these points as you gather the appropriate staff for your booth. These people can turn and turn off a potential customer.

The Art of Engagement and Conversation in the Booth

Donna Hegdahl of The TransSynergy Group talks about the "zombie zone" attendees get into as they are walking the aisle of a show. There are so many distractions, colors, lights, noise that they move in almost a trance. So it is your responsibility to politely move them into a conversation so you can determine if they are a prospect for your firm.

Most companies try and sell during a trade show, and she considers that a wrong approach. Because there are too many distractions all too often they forget everything you told them. So it is your job to collect information and get back to them. Don't count on the prospect to remember to call you!

Most companies try and sell during a trade show, and she considers that a wrong approach. Because there are too many distractions all too often they forget everything you told them. So it is your job to collect information and get back to them. Don't count on the prospect to remember to call you!

Don't try and sell, instead "gather" the information you need to determine if they are a prospect for you. Gathering information is the opposite of selling.

What are the 5 qualifying questions that let YOU determine if they are a prospect for you? If you get these questions answered, then you know where to take it from there!

We had stated in an earlier section about having a "pick up" line. You need an opener to get their attention as they walk down the aisle. Please note, this is NOT "Can I help you?" or "How are you today?"

You want an open-ended question to get them talking, like:

- What's the best thing you've seen at the show

- What's your biggest challenge this year
- What did you hope to find at the show

Now that you have their attention…are they someone you want to talk to?

- Ask a question about THEIR responsibility at the company
- "Are you responsible for _________"
- If no…ask "who is?"
- "Are you involved with _________"

They may be a source of information about potential projects.

Donna recommends "If they are not the right person, don't waste another second with this person while potential "hot" prospects are walking by the booth. Escort this person out of the booth quickly and politely so you can engage with the right prospect."

Now if you find a decision-maker for your target company-type…take it a step further and find out if a project is on the horizon by asking:

- "Is your company planning a __________?"
- "Have you chosen a vendor?"
- "When will you make that decision?"
- "What are the criteria for ______?"
- "What is the budget for ______?"

Remember that the attendees are in the Zombie Zone…they may tell you anything you ask!

- "How did the ______ project go last time?"
- "What was the biggest problem?"
- "What was the best part of ____?"

There is a webinar on the Let's Talk Trade Shows site where Donna covers all this material. One exhibitor changed their mode to collect information rather than selling at a show. The results, from their 10 x 10 booth and having conversations, they came home with 100 HOT leads.

Consider having a meeting with your marketing team, including a sales person or two and discuss the process and questions Donnas has outlined.

The Cost Considerations for the Show and Your Budget

The *Exhibitor Magazin*e is referenced through this eBook because they have informative articles. If you do not subscribe yet, it is one of my recommendations that you have the monthly magazine delivered. It is one I keep and have as a handy reference tool in my office.

The November 2009 issue had an article titled: "Budgeting the Numbers Game." From this article, let me reference some of the numbers you should know. Please note that these are ***general numbers*** and you need to explore the show specific exhibitor manual to see the actual costs that particular show. Also union labor has different cost structure depending on the city. There is a difference between Las Vegas and Indianapolis regarding union labor, so thoroughly check the exhibitor's manual.

Drayage Rates
(per CWT)

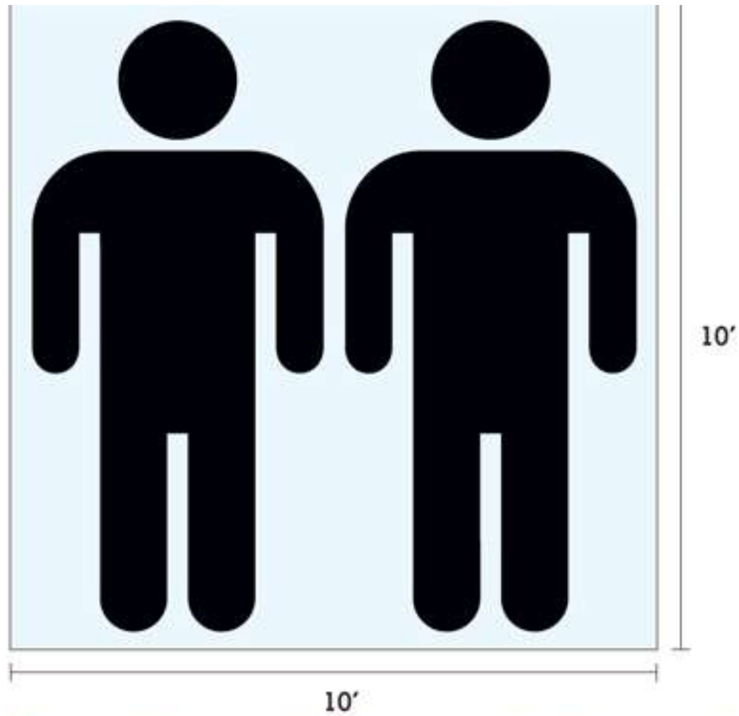
$81.37
Advance shipments to general service contractor

$74.90
Advanced shipments to exhibit hall

$97.21
Direct, crated with special handling

$117.14
Direct, uncrated

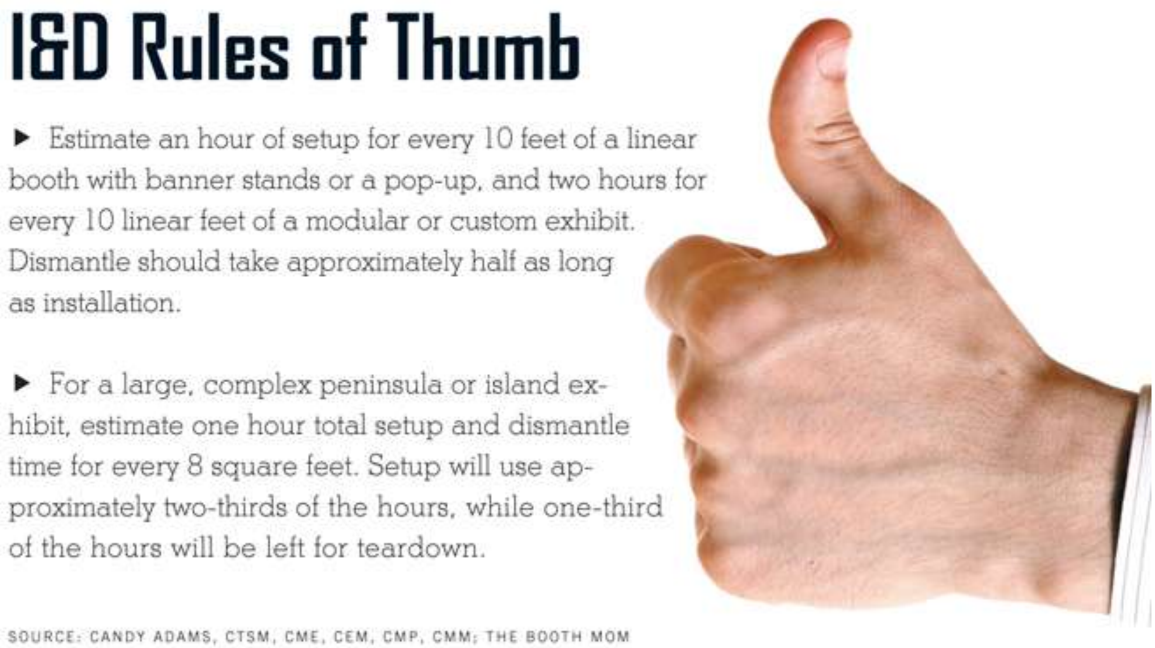
SOURCE: TRADESHOW WEEK'S 2009 SURVEY OF U.S. AND CANADIAN LABOR RATES, COPYRIGHT 2009 TRADESHOW WEEK INC.



Staffing Rules of Thumb

▶ You will generally need one exhibit staff person for every 50 square feet of open exhibit space.

▶ Budget an average of $2,000 per staffer per show to cover the cost of air travel, ground transportation, hotel, food, Internet, and miscellaneous tips.



GIVEAWAYS - SHOULD YOU OR SHOULDN'T YOU?

Typically the question arises as you are preparing for the show about having some type of giveaway or incentive for the attendees who are walking up and down the aisle. Think of giveaways and literature as props – not nearly as important as your "stage presence" on the show floor, and why you want to feel complete confidence in the people you have selected to work the booth. Don't take the lazy man's way out!

Salespeople can be intimidated in the show environment, especially if their preference is one-on-one sales consulting. It can feel overwhelming to see sometimes hundreds of people going by. The last image you want to project to attendees is your salespeople waiting around for something to happen – when really they are too shy to start a conversation to strangers first. Remember that, just like actors (for example, Dustin Hoffman), a good salesperson can actually be quite shy and not always prone to make the first move.

Most likely the idea of giveaways and literature was born, I suspect, as much as wanting to give attendees something to remember you by or to read on the ride home. It's not a bad thing, but often misused, especially when they substitute for good communication skills. Use them sparingly. Make sure the customer wants them or else you may see them left behind, or worse, on the show floor on your next trip to the bathroom.

Susan Friedmann, The Trade Show Coach is a vast resource of information. In the following material she has wise advice for us about the topic of giveaways.

Susan Friedmann tells this great story:

> *I was teaching an exhibitor workshop recently when a participant told me about this GREAT giveaway item she'd recently picked up at a trade show. It was a can cozy, an insulated foam wrap designed to slip over beverage cans and keep them cold. She thought it was the most amazing product.*
>
> *"That's great. Can you tell me what company gave it to you?" She could not.*
>
> *"And what did you do with the can cozy?" I asked."It was so nice, I gave it to my dad!" she promptly replied.*
>
> *Now, was this a great giveaway item? # The participant couldn't even remember who had given it to her. To add fuel to fire, she'd given it to someone completely unrelated to the business. This marketing message definitely failed the "keep it" test!*

The purpose of a giveaway is to increase recognition of your company. Make your giveaways memorable and effective by considering these four essentials:

1. What your target audience wants
2. What will help them do their jobs bette
3. What they can't get elsewhere
4. What is product/service related

Don't be afraid to think far outside the box – You want attendees to remember the giveaway AND your name!

> **Bonus Tip:** *Think about having different gifts for different types of visitors. Giveaways can function in two ways: as rewards for visitor participation in a demonstration, presentation, or contest or as a thank you to the visitors who give you specific information about their needs.*

Susan's article below can provide key considerations for you as you evaluate the use of promotional products.

10 Tips to Use Giveaways Effectively

Walk around any trade or consumer show and you will be able to collect a bag full of advertising specialties, or giveaway items all designed to promote. But look a little more closely. How many really do an effective job? How clearly do they get a message across? Is the message sufficiently visible? Is the giveaway useful or unique enough that you would want to keep and use it? All these questions, and more, need to be considered before jumping into the giveaway game.

Everyone enjoys receiving a gift, even if it is "just a little something." Gift giving creates a favorable impression. It can build goodwill, be an incentive, communicate a message and create awareness.

When thinking about advertising specialties for your next show, consider the following ten questions:

1. **What do you want to achieve by giving away a premium item?**

Your giveaway items should be designed to increase your memorability, communicate, motivate, promote or increase recognition. It is important not only that the message have an impact, but also the premium itself.

2. **How will you select your premium item?**

There is a multitude of different items you could consider as a premium. However, which one will best suit your purpose? To select the right item, you need to decide your objective. Do you want it to enhance a theme; convey a specific message or educate your target audience? A clear purpose should help make your selection process easier. A promotional specialist can also help you make an effective selection. Remember that your company image is reflected in whatever you choose to give away.

3. **Whom do you want to receive your premium?**

Having a clear objective for your premium item will also help you decide who should receive it. You may consider having different gifts for different types of visitors. You might have different quality gifts for your key customers, prospects and general passers by.

4. How does your giveaway tie into your marketing theme?

Is there an item that naturally complements your marketing message? Have the message imprinted on the item and make sure that your company name, logo and phone number appear clearly. An important aspect of any gift is to remember who it was from long after the fact.

5. **What is your budget?**

The price range for premium items is enormous. Quality, quantity and special orders, all impact the price. Establish a budget as part of your exhibit marketing plan. Consider ordering the same item for several different shows. The greater the quantity of your order, the lower the individual unit price.

6. **What must visitors do to qualify for a gift item?**

There are several ways to use your premium effectively. For example: As a reward for visitors participating in a demonstration, presentation or contest; as a token of your appreciation when visitors have given you qualifying information about their specific needs; as a thank you for stopping at the booth. Avoid leaving items out for anyone to take. This diminishes value and has little or no memorability factor.

7. **Will your giveaway directly help your future sales?**

Consider handing out a discount coupon or a gift certificate that requires future contact with your company for redemption. Consider premiums that will help generate frequent visits to customers and prospects, such as calling you for free refills.

8. **How does your premium item complement your exhibiting goals?**

Premiums can be used to prequalify your prospects. One company uses playing cards. Prior to the show, they send "kings" to their key customers, "queens" to suppliers, "jacks" to new or hot prospects. They request that the cards are brought to the booth in exchange for a special gift. When the cards are presented, the booth staff already knows certain information about the visitor. They can then act on their previous knowledge and use time with the visitor more productively.

9. **How will you inform your target audience about you giveaway item?**

A sufficiently novel or useful giveaway can actively help to draw prospects to your booth. So make sure your prospects know about it. Send a "tickler" invitation with details of the giveaway, or create a two-piece premium, sending one part out to key prospects prior to the show and telling them to collect the other half at your booth.

10. **How will you measure the effectiveness of your premium?**

Establish a tracking mechanism to measure the success of your giveaway. If it is a redemption item, code it so that you know it resulted from the show. Post-show follow-up could include a question about the premium - did visitors remember receiving it and how useful was the item. After the show, critique your giveaway with your exhibit team: Did it draw specific prospects to the booth? Was it eye-catching enough to persuade passersby to stop? Did your customers find it useful? Did it project the right corporate image?

There are plenty of exciting premiums for you to choose from so that you can avoid the usual pens, pencils and key chains. Make your premium work for you and it will be money well invested.

Please check out the offerings from 4imprint as you are evaluating them for your event program. They have a complete offering with various price points. Also they have a treasure trove of Blue Papers which cover many general business topics as well as event related material. The Blue Papers are located at the bottom of their landing page. In this eBook I have highlighted a couple of them.

PREPARATION: THE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL EVENT

The trade show or event requires detailed preparation. Those companies who do not pay enough attention are the ones who complain that the show was not a good one for them. They are most often looking to "blame" someone other than taking the responsibility on themselves.

For those of you who are a perpetual student of marketing with an emphasis on face-to-face marketing there are some great resources to use. The website Alltop has a listing of bloggers who cover the event world.

The URL for the Tradeshows is: http://tradeshows.alltop.com/

The URL for the Event Planning is: http://event-planning.alltop.com/

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Screenshots from these two sites are below:

Tradeshows

MOST TOPULAR STORIES

- Two Clothes Shows Bring Spark to Summer Months
- The Dynamics of a Virtual Event from the Show Floor
- Putting More R in Your ROI—Top Trends in Trade Show
- 5 iPad Apps You Should Consider at your Tradeshow
- How to Make Money on Virtual Trade Shows and

TSNN.COM

- Global Sources, Questex Media Group Bullish on the Future
- Two Clothes Shows Bring Spark to Summer Months
- How to Make Money on Virtual Trade Shows and
- Professional Baseball and Hybrid Events
- Chicago: What's the Verdict on the Labor Overhaul?

TRADE SHOW BLOG

- Trade Show Booth Graphic -- The Impact of Display Elements
- Trade Show Banner Stand - Benefit from Impact and
- Trade Show Accessory - Exhibit Flooring
- Trade Show Exhibit Booth Visitors -- Reading Body Language
- Trade Show Success Strategies

CEIR BLOG

- Government Report: Building a Better Display
- New Guru Report: Space Allocation
- The Dynamics of a Virtual Event from the Show Floor
- The Ultimate Show Blog - Blogworld
- Capturing the Heartbeat of the Show Floor

EXHIBITOR NEWS NETWORK

- Moss' EZ Fabric Wall System Wins an EXHIBITOR Magazine
- 3D Exhibits Opens Delaware Production Facility
- Experient Announces Divisional Leadership Changes
- GES Wins Stevie Award in Eighth Annual American Business
- John Moyes of General Graphics Exhibits Re-elected to OSPI

IAEE.COM

- Top Ten Public Events in the USA
- Our Hero of the Week: Dan Spigner
- The Center is Humming with Activity
- IAEE and the National Export Initiative (NEI) are Gaining
- U.S. Travel Association Board of Directors Meeting

Event Planning

MOST TOPULAR STORIES

- Lollapalooza Returns With Bigger Footprint, Fancier Snacks,
- How to Hire Corporate Entertainment to Deliver an Impactful
- Cooling Off with Fall's Hot New Color Trends
- Special Events Business News for Aug. 11, 2010
- Decor Tips for Wedding Tents

FRESH EVENT TIPS

- Creative Postcards for Next Event
- New NYC Event Space, eco-friendly too
- Bay Area Cover Band
- Decor Tips for Wedding Tents
- Raffle: Ronald McDonald House Raffle...enter to win

WHY I LOVE THIS JOB

- SeaWorld, Trust, and How to Successfully Leave Money on
- Quick take on some humorous aspects of technology
- No Fear
- Some business advice, from the world of funny dog videos.
- Oh Dear Lord, Please No Lepers Today. Or Any Day.

MEETINGS PODCAST

- Going Digital 3 EBITM Worldwide Meetings Technology &
- Double Rainbow- Is Your Content Passionate?
- Top 5 Results From MPI World Education Congress -131
- Corporate Meeting Production Teams Explained
- Making A Difference At WEC MPI 2010

BIZBASH NATIONAL NEWS

- Lollapalooza Returns With Bigger Footprint, Fancier Snacks,
- Off-Site Lollapalooza Lounge Celebrates Fifth Anniversary
- Santa Monica Place Opens With Events From Intimate to Giant
- Parkways Foundation Benefit Gives Corporate Guests V.I.P.

READY 2 SPARK

- #eventprofs blog awards are open for business
- Why event planners need to beware of the Social Media
- is crowdsourced event, wedding & meeting planning coming?
- why large conferences need to beware of social media

LET'S TALK TRADE SHOWS WEBSITE

Please make a point of checking my website out on a frequent basis. I cover many topics which revolve around a successful event experience. It is a community of informed marketing professionals who seek the bar of excellence in their efforts.

Now depending on your interest level, we can have a forum for discussion. Or we can use other groups like LinkedIn for continuing the conversation.

When Disaster Strikes - Losing $2M in Trade Show Equipment Overnight – Insuring Your Exhibits

It is a nightmare all exhibitors fear. The recent flooding across Nashville has left its mark on homes, businesses and the Grand Old Opry. The Opryland Hotel was hosting a convention and trade show at the time of the flooding. Bev Gray from Exhibit Edge shares with us a recent experience she and a client experienced at a trade show that was taking place during the horrific floods. There are valuable lessons to learn from this experience.

Here is her story:

> On May 2, the Department of Defense, DISA (Defense Information Systems Agency) canceled their Customer Partnership Conference at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville due to excessive flooding. The Conference attracts approximately 350 defense technology exhibitors and 5,000 government, military, and industry attendees. The well attended, high profile Conference was scheduled to open on Monday, May 3. All the freight was on the floor and most exhibits were installed or were in the process of being installed when the waters rose.
>
> While an official written statement has not been sent out by the Gaylord Opryland Hotel, J. Spargo & Associates, Inc. the full-service event management

company managing the event, has issued emails to the exhibitors stating that "there will be no materials salvageable from the Exhibit Hall". It has not been determined if the show will be rescheduled.

While the cost of all the show floor property has not been estimated, one of our clients on the floor lost over $2,000,000 in company manufactured equipment. This client's loss does not include other expenses incurred such as exhibit properties, booth space purchase, travel expenses, loss of potential sales, etc.

As a full service exhibit company, we carry many forms of insurance to protect our clients. We carry insurance on the freight stored in our warehouse. We also hold "inland marine" insurance to insure freight that is being transported in our trucks. We carry "legal liability" insurance to cover property for other incidences when we could be held responsible for loss of client's property. This last insurance was added for our company's protection when three client monitors were stolen off of the trade show floor during the night in France.

Unfortunately the majority of the exhibits, equipment, property, etc. that are not salvageable in the Opryland Hotel will not be covered by insurance because flood waters are generally excluded from coverage. (Earthquakes, war, and nuclear hazard are also typically not covered.) While no insurance policy protects against every conceivable peril, this recent incident does bring to the forefront the issue of exhibit insurance and protection for property of others while in your care, whether on your premises, in transit or on location. You need to think about your property and whose care, custody, or control they are in, then properly insure them or decide to assume the risk. Doing so could save you a lot of money should your equipment get lost or stolen.

Another area you should be concerned with is the potential contractual liability that you may be assuming. Properly worded, the contract you use will clearly identify your responsibility with regard to exhibit property. In other words, at what point does your responsibility for damage to property of others begin and end. Further, the contract should contain a solid "Hold-Harmless" agreement, whereby you accept responsibility for damage only for those situations in which you are the sole or contributing cause of damage.

Although the insurance, legal, and contractual side of exhibiting is something many exhibitors would rather not think about, it does pay to do your homework in this area so that you can make intelligent decisions on whether you should carry insurance or assume risk. You never know when your equipment may be lost in freight, stolen off of the trade show floor, or broken by a runaway forklift!

This guest post was written by Bev Gray, President and CEO of Exhibit Edge. Based in Northern Virginia, Exhibit Edge designs and fabricates custom trade show exhibits, sells modular exhibit systems, provides trade show management services, and consults on a variety of trade show topics. Bev has over 25 years of experience in the exhibit and trade show industry.

Please note that the photos are from Facebook, Stephen Lee's photos.

Check out the Let's Talk Trade Shows website for free and paid webinar education.

http://www.letstalktradeshows.com/webinars-2/

Chapter Six – How Green Can You Go?

“Protecting our planet against global warming is a critical issue and concerns everyone. As individuals, we are all paying more attention and buying "green" products and responsibly recycling, reducing and reusing.

Did you know that the second largest producer of solid waste contributing to landfill is the exposition industry? Yes! We are right at the *"top of the heap"* next to the construction industry. Greening expositions is one of the fastest growing topics of discussion by trade associations and in trade publications. The leading stakeholders are taking measures to reduce our carbon footprint and that as an industry we are committed to making a difference,” says Jai Cole.

Jai Cole of Plum Communications has authored two CEIR Guru reports, *Part I A ‘Greener' Place for Face to Face: A Focus on Exhibitors* and *Part II: Focus on Exhibition Organizers.*

“Going green is a dramatic game changer in the evolution of the exhibition, which until the advent of electricity and modern communications has remained quite uneventful.

Knowledge and education are leading the way to a greener exhibition industry; “walking the talk” and “demonstrating by example” is how we will attain our goal – keeping our planet safe for future generations.

As more questions are being asked, more resources will be offered and together we, as an industry, will work to make a difference in global health and keeping our planet safe for future generations.

Reducing Your Carbon Footprint on the Show Floor

In this Guru report authored by Jai Cole, there is one section on carbon foot via printing and shipping literature to the show. Below I want to present the Guru report material and afterwards talk about a supplier who is helping to address that particular green aspect. From the report, there is a discussion about shipping:

> Drastically reduce your carbon footprint by decreasing the shipping volume. A tool for determining the carbon footprint is an energy resource calculator. See how much your carbon footprint can be reduced by shipping less.

Advance planning can go a long way in reducing waste from shipping. For example:

- Electronically send digital files to a local printer for production.
- Electronically send product information to attendees.

- Use lead retrieval systems offered by show management to send digital files to prospects after the show. One company set up a laptop with email capability and electronically sent the files while staffing their booth. (Now that you have their email address, ask permission to send future information via email.)
- Use lighter weight shipping materials as an alternative to standard shipping crates.
- Store the booth locally if you exhibit at several shows in the same city.
- Lower return freight by re-cycling or repurposing items that do not need to be returned from the show.

There is additional information in this report and it can be purchased at www.ceir.org.

SENDING PRODUCT INFORMATION ELECTRONICALLY TO THE ATTENDEES

The cost to produce and ship literature to a show can be quite expensive. The exhibitor must choose which literature to produce for a show and this can be difficult if they have many product variations and/or types. Literature is a heavy item to ship, thus costly. And all too often the literature is thrown away either by the exhibitor or the attendee who has decided to lighten up on the way home.

One of the eBook sponsors is PRMconnect and they have a terrific solution for this literature situation. Their product is called Leadature.

Compare these two pictures – the first one is the OLD Way and them the New Way.

Lugging a lot of “stuff”. The picture is from a blog post on the 4imprint website.

Sending information electronically.

PRMconnect-Leadature

Leadature is a kiosk-based lead-retrieval system that allows attendees to request only the literature they want to receive from a given exhibitor. The kiosks can be customized with electronic trivia games or sweepstakes to draw in attendees on-site. After users play the game or answer the questions, they are led to the interface where they can pick and choose from the company’s offerings, which can include interactive files and video as well as traditional literature. Materials are sent from PRM’s servers directly to the attendee’s inbox. Once attendees open files, the interface allows them to send immediate inquiries to the company right in the file. It also notifies the company that information is being read and by whom, allowing sales teams to follow-up on leads at just the right time. A viral marketing feature allows the user to forward literature to a colleague, and that too can be measured. Conference managers can also use the system to deliver and track literature about conference sessions.

A Leadature Case History

The following information is from one of PRMconnect's clients. They are sharing their perspective on using Leadature and the difference it has made not only in terms of cost savings but maintaining their green values. Below is their story:

> We are a green energy company, our tagline is a "sustainable way of life," and these products and services are true to the vision of our company. We all know trade shows are not a sustainable industry, regarding moving from show to show, building and tearing down.
>
> I so appreciate having a green solution, where leads are implemented, and communications sent, in a virtual way, is all green.
>
> From shipping perspective, list goes on and on.
>
> The Old Way Regarding Literature for a Show
>
> - Printing literature for every show, by show. The expenses just for the literature were outrageous. It was a great portion of the overall expenses for the entire show.
> - Paying drayage – especially all the heavy weight of the literature.
> - Shipping charges – getting all the literature to and from the show.
> - Graphic design for every brochure and print item – branding and rebranding the print items.
>
> Using Leadature I have been able to completely eliminate three line items on the list above. I have over 1800 different products and cannot bring all the different brochures I need to a show. Now that I have Leadature, I can bring them all. In fact, I don't even have to *bring* it. It's already there, waiting for me, in virtual form. *All of it.*
>
> Leadature has allowed me to reduce costs and have all of my materials at the show site.

The Old Way Regarding Lead Follow-up

- Four weeks after the event, we are still sorting through leads to find out what people want and the best way to follow-up.
- The lead was only name address, etc. It did not indicate the prospects interest or the engagement they had with us in the show floor.

be green
be strategic
be a hero

"I was amazed at how easy it was to use"

"I can bring our entire sales library all the time!"

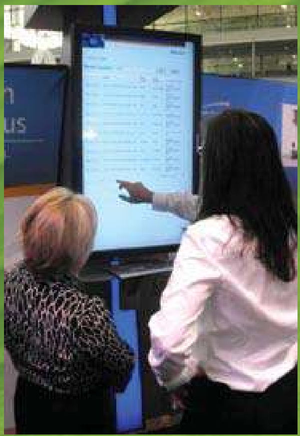
"This is the only system we have had that allows me to actually engage with my customer while using the system to help them"

LEADATURE

From PRMconnect

know what your customers want 24/7

Combine literature distribution with real time lead tracking and real time ROI.
Use from ANY web browser device including touch screen laptop ipad smart phone.



THE GREEN SOLUTION FOR LEAD MANAGEMENT AND LITERATURE DISTRIBUTION

Leadature is the perfect paperless all-in-one system that combines lead management and individualized qualification with electronic literature distribution and post event measurement. Leadature allows you to administrate both your leads and a global document library to service all your events from an easy to use on-line tool.

Call for demo 702-818-2541 | www.prmconnect.com | info@prmconnect.com

Pat. Pending

The New Way Due to the Functions of Leadature

- I am able to follow-up in an instant. Most of our leads have all been contacted, with further information they seek by the time I arrive at work on Monday after the show.
- I am able to move the lead follow-up process ahead more quickly.
- Four weeks out from the event, my sales team has almost followed up on every lead. That is impossible when doing this the traditional way.

The Leadature system gives our team the ability to implement qualifying questions and respond immediately. The sales team knows who to call which saves time. They have all qualifying data right away, so there is no need to take the time or the expense to research this.

My team was nervous about new system before the event, not knowing what to do without distributing print – how to strike up a conversation? They asked:

> "What if someone really wants a takeaway, and we don't have anything to give them?"

So we coached them to have this response:

> "We are a green company and we don't print, but we have a very efficient way of getting you exactly what you want immediately."

Nine times out of ten, the booth visitor responded, "awesome!!" They, too, were interested in being green, and also did not want to put literature in their bag and have to carry it around.

Also, an unexpected extra was that this really helped drive the conversation to our products. Before Leadature our employees would say, "I feel like I am just a literature distribution guy, I am so busy running around getting literature that I have no time for meaningful conversation about our products."

Now the conversation was not about literature anymore, it was about the service we provide. It is now more about being a Solutions provider, finding out that particular individual's pain points and showing them our solution.

> Everyone carries about the same product. We are not going to differentiate ourselves by the literature we have in the booth.
>
> For me personally, Leadature has saved weeks of spreadsheet work. After one day of spreadsheet work, your brain feels like mush. Imagine how grateful I feel after you have saved me WEEKS of the dreaded spreadsheet work.

The Leadature product has made a significant impact on this company and the other exhibitors it works with.

A New Focus on the Show Floor

Show organizers as well as exhibitors are addressing the green aspect for the exhibition industry. The National Restaurant Association has created a new section called the Conserve Solutions Center for the 2010 show held in May. Below is what they are offered in this Center:

> **Conserve Solutions Center**
>
> The 2010 National Restaurant Association Restaurant, Hotel-Motel Show® is the premier foodservice event for buyers who want to stay ahead of the competition.
>
> The Conserve Solutions Center is a newly focused area on the NRA Show floor dedicated specifically to help buyers easily find "sustainability related" products and services to meet operator demand for greener solutions.
>
> Exhibit your products and services to demonstrate how you can help them meet their sustainability objectives.
>
> If you have products that help businesses reduce their environmental impact, Conserve Solutions Center is the place to exhibit:
>
> - Sustainability focused media companies
> - Biodegradable/Compostable products
> - Packaging
> - Food processes
> - Consulting, education, and services
> - Or any other products that reduce environmental impact

SEMICON West

The following example is from the SEMICON West's website. It demonstrates how seriously this show is undertaking the Green initiatives.

What Exhibitors Can Do

SEMICON West provides our industry an opportunity to convene at one time, one place. By exhibiting, your company avoids thousands of miles of additional business travel.

As a SEMICON West exhibitor, the choices you make in your booth property have a direct impact on the environmental resources expended and consumed during the event. The move towards "Green Exhibiting" is an important trend in the exhibition industry, and should be especially important to you if your company has sustainability goals and objectives. The expectation by the public and your customers for suppliers to act in an environmentally responsible manner is becoming increasingly clear. SEMI and its tradeshow partners have developed strategies for making SEMICON West more sustainable as a tradeshow venue. We want to provide you, our valued exhibitor, with opportunities for making your exhibiting practices greener as well. Click here to read on.

Greening your exhibit programs is not just good for our environment, it's also good for our corporate identity and it may even help you win more business. Did you know that some corporations are now giving purchasing preference to companies with green business practices? As you can see we all have a lot to gain from greener exhibiting. Go to Green Exhibiting: Reducing Your Environmental Footprint at Tradeshows to read on and be sure to promote your company's own environmental initiatives.

Sustainable Technologies Award Exhibitors, promote your green side! Is sustainability a priority at your company? Does your company have equipment, materials or services that contribute to the sustainable improvement of the environment? The SEMICON West 2010 Sustainable Technologies Award provides recognition of exhibitors who provide equipment, materials or services that contribute to sustainable improvement of the environment. Entry is open to all SEMICON West 2010 exhibitors of commercially available equipment, materials or services that have been introduced into the market within the last 3 years.

Exhibitors Green Guide Great reasons for exhibitors to participate in Moscone Center's elaborate programs:

- Leave no trace behind: Ship out all booth properties, literature and giveaways that you have shipped in, thereby minimizing Moscone's dumpster waste.
- Recycle: Bring only what you need to the event. Recycle unwanted items and empty your corrugated cardboard boxes at show site. The average exhibitor will produce between 8 and 10 pounds of corrugated cardboard alone.
- Print your collateral materials on recycled paper stock, using vegetable-based inks or have materials available in digital and online rather than printed form.
- Merchandise: Give away items: Look at using recycled materials for notebooks, pens, bags wherever possible. Donate leftover reusable items to local nonprofits at show site to save on shipping and waste.
- Donate: Did you know that San Francisco is home to more than 7,000 nonprofits? To match your company with an appropriate service project, contact www.thevolunteercenter.net.
- Look at the materials used to build the exhibit; consider their origins and how recyclable, reusable and environmentally friendly they are. Then, give some thought to the transportation required to get the booth from point A to point B and back.
- Shipping: As much as 75% of an exhibitor's environmental footprint results from release of carbon to the atmosphere from transportation and logistics.
- For collateral that must be shipped to and from the show, consider using a shipping carrier whose vehicles run on non-fossil fuels, or that purchases carbon offset credits.

Below is SEMICON Green Exhibitor Checklist:

Give-a-Ways

- Was your give-a-way made from recycled materials?
- Your give-a-way did not have unnecessary packaging?
- Did you donate any leftover give-a-ways?
- If you donated, did you let Show Management know in advance that you might have give-a-ways to donate?

Promotional Materials

- Were your promotional materials printed on recycled content paper?
- Were they printed or copied back-to-back?
- You did not use vegetable based ink?
- You did not use goldenrod or florescent colored paper?

Packing

Did you ship back all materials that were not shipped back (including empty boxes), that were recyclable, to the recycling containers located in the exposition halls?

Booth

- Did your exhibit booth contain any recycled content materials?
- Did you order Freeman's environmentally friendly carpet or exhibits? Note: Freeman was their Official Services Contractor.

Each exhibitor should evaluate their Green strategy and its implementation for their exhibition program. As we increase our collective consciousness about the appropriateness of being green, the great breadth and depth of the green solution for your organization will be apparent. What started out as a trend will be a well-establish de facto standard for all of us.

Check out the Let's Talk Trade Shows website for free and paid webinar education.

http://www.letstalktradeshows.com/webinars-2/

Chapter Seven - Using Twitter to Drive Tons of Traffic and Attention for Your Booth

The last two years has seen a dramatic rise in the use of Twitter as a tool to help drive booth traffic. In fact, it can enhance an exhibiting company's overall brand at a show. In this chapter, we will discuss the ways you can use this particular marketing tool effectively.

Twitter is a unique marketing medium and one that is relatively brand-new; and in this respect, it requires an expert's know-how as we examine the way exhibitors can use it effectively. Ian McGonnigal, SVP of Client Strategy and Brand Performance at Jack Morton Worldwide, is an executive with two decades of marketing leadership on his resume. He's a social media marketing expert; and in the following interview, I had with him recently about Twitter, he gave me so much invaluable advice that I thought it best to share our entire interview.

A marketing expert's thoughts on Twitter

Joyce: So Ian, tell us what's happening with Twitter today?

Ian: Thanks Joyce. And I'll try to coach my comments on how Twitter relates to event or experiential marketing. And after looking at Twitter, being a Twitter aficionado last year or so, I've learned quite of bit of things.

First of all, by reading some of the experts out there like [Chris Brogan] and others as well as participating myself and like many of you, I've made a lot of mistakes along the way; learned from them, tried different things and from the very mark in perspective, there are several things that you should know and think about and consider while you are looking at integrating Twitter into your event program.

The first of which is it is important to think about your community as a community first and the event second. So, try not to think about 'how do I integrate Twitter into my event,' but 'how do I integrate my event in the community that people are twitting about' because an event has a single point in time. It's got a short proximity where people are only available for that period of time and in that fixed space. But a community and relationships you build within that community are long term.

The second thing is if you are out there twitting and you're building some sort of a presence on Twitter, especially within marketing space, decide what your niche is going to be. There are many people out there tweeting about many different things and in order to be successful, of course, you could be yet another person talking about social media on social media. But if you're out there talking about something that you're really good at, that your company does, that's meaningful to your brand, you get a lot more attraction as far as attracting followers and being able to become a viable part of their community.

The third thing we'll talk about is followers. And when you're on Twitter, followers don't happen magically, you need to understand…It's important to first of all decide who you want to follow, follow people that are within your niche…and talk about interesting things that are relative to you and follow them.

It's also a good idea to look at those followers and attract them like supplying relevant content, fresh content that's useful to them. Twitter's not the best place to be narcissistic and really talking about yourself. You want to be sharing as much that you're learning from the community with the community is possible.

Number of followers might be your game. You might want to be like Ashton Kutcher and get billions of followers. But realistically, what you're probably interested in is getting people who are interested in who you are and what you have to say which realistically is not going to be millions of people unless you're Ashton Kutcher. But if you do have the right niche, you're going to attract the right followers.

Also it's important to recognize that you are not the only authority on content even though you are expert or you may be an expert and something that you are passionate about. There are several other people that are good at what you do and good at what they do. So, share their information, visit their blogs, and promote them as much as they promote you. In over time, you'll build a very strong following and a level of expertise. That's really going to help you succeed.

Joyce: Now on this one, let me stop you. Can you talk about re-tweeting a bit?

Ian: Re-tweeting is a good practice to get into. Part of it is re-tweeting, part of it is looking at their destinations or their blogs and tweeting them, being the first person who tweets interesting content. But it is also looking at any way that they're engaging online and try to participate in that. Outside of Twitter, you can leave comments on their blogs; you can invite them to comment on your blog, you can work together to co-produce different blog posts or share information outside of both of your worlds that really help [both of you] succeed.

It's also important on Twitter to follow the 80-20 rule. And I can't tell you how many times I see that someone is drinking coffee or taking a nap or playing soccer online and well, that's interesting sometimes. It gives me good sense of what someone's personality is and what they're interested in. I think it's better to blog about or tweet about those things that are most relevant to community. So, 80% should be value added content. And remember, relationships are predicated upon mutual exchange and value. So if you're adding value to the community, that's great. And spend the other 20% talking about yourself, who you are, what your interests are.

And another thing that's interesting, not just for Twitter but for all social media: **think like a search engine**. When you're posting, of course, it's good to have assurance of synced posts so you make it simpler and easier for people to re-tweet. In fact, a hundred characters is the new 140. But if you think like a search engine and you use key words and terms that are relevant to your audience and your subject matter niche, it's going to be a lot more effective on people when they go back to try to re-search you and find out who you are build up your own personal SEO as I'd like to call it. You'll be [making their job easier]. So if you're using something like Twitter search or IceRocket Twitter search, it really makes it, again, simpler for people to find the subject matter that you're tweeting about or re-tweeting about.

Joyce: And that was IceRocket search? That's something I've never heard of.

Ian: It's a fantastic search engine. It searches everything from Twitter to blogs to websites and that sort of thing. And it's a lot faster than search.twitter.com. That's what I like about it. It's also a good idea, when you're thinking about using Twitter, especially for events, [to use] hashtags. Create a hashtag for your event or for the subject matter or the community that you're working in and look at those hashtags as a routing point for your community. I belong to a group for example called Eventprofs (# eventprofs). And every time anybody in that community has something relevant to tweet, they tag it with that.

We also use that for twit chat or tweet chat which really is another application you can look into that's very useful for events. And then finally, Twitter… is not necessarily a destination but it's a place to drive people to destinations. So if you're on Twitter, it's a really good idea to have a destination of your own or point people to destinations that are more relevant to them. For example, I have my own blog, www.experientialmarketing20.com. Or other people have other destinations. It might be your company website, it might be your Facebook page, it might be your LinkedIn profile. Have a destination that people can go to and learn more about what you're saying and more about what you have to offer.

Joyce: Let's talk about the frequency of tweeting. So do I need to tweet every day, [and] if I miss a day, what… could happen?

Ian: Well I think you should tweet as often as you can. The more you tweet, the more relevant you become because you've been able to unmask a larger amount of content. However, if you tweet too much, you'll run the risk of becoming known as a spammer. I fall into the category that I try to tweet [everyday] that sometimes there'll be a few days where I'm travelling for clients or what have you that you're just not able to do it and then I'll try to catch up and re-tweet several things at a time.

Experiment and find out what works with your life. It is important to post regularly. And regularly can be loosely defined as maybe once or a few times a day or it could be a few times a week. If it gets to the point where it's several weeks between tweets, I think that's a little bit too light. If it gets to the point where you're tweeting every 10 minutes, it's too heavy. I think its somewhere in between so that you keep your community interested and involved in what you're saying without becoming a spammer.

THE TWEET FEST PLAN

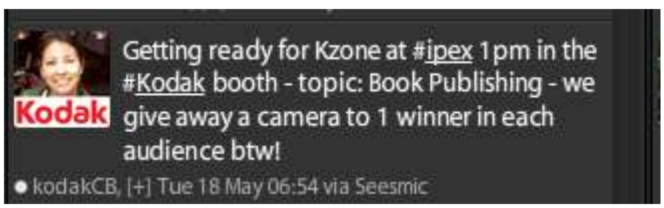
In the previous section, Ian suggested an 80 – 20 rule, where 80% of the time should Tweet about things relevant to your community and only 20% about you and/or your company. However, you want to drive as much attention as possible to your booth and its related activities at a show. So how do you use Twitter without outwardly appearing only self-serving? That why Let's Talk Trade Shows created the Tweet Fest Plan – a way for you to maximize your exposure and help yourself as well as other exhibitors.

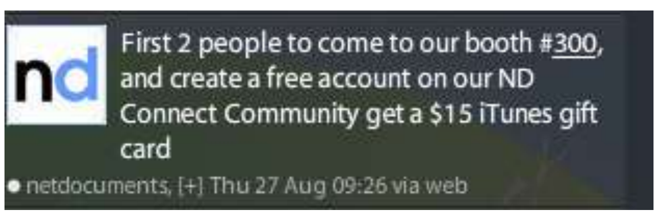
BOOTH TRAFFIC

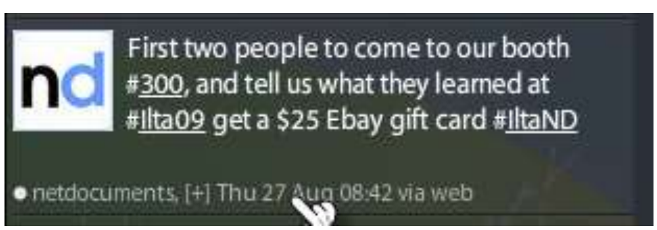
A major goal for exhibiting is getting people into your booth. You want conversations to take place so they can determine the attendees' interest levels and turn these prospects into customers.

Twitter can be used effectively to help draw an audience to your booth. First, you need to have a following on twitter – no matter what! For the care and feeding of your Twitter followers, you should be providing quality Tweets (not self-serving ones). It is the 80/20 rule – 80% of the Tweets are about others and then 20% can be about you.

Below are a few examples of good Tweets to draw traffic to your booth:







EXHIBITORS HELPING OTHER EXHIBITORS

The challenge for exhibitors is that you do not want to be constantly Tweeting about YOU!! So take the initiative and get with several fellow exhibitors (most likely your noncompetitors) BEFORE the show and talk about the ways each of you can Tweet about each others' products, services, white papers, speakers, etc. Find out the value-added pieces of content you have collectively.

Then you can use a service like Social Oomph to facilitate Tweets during the show. You can have a master schedule of who is Tweeting about you and at what time.

The creative minds among this collective exhibitor team should net quite a buzz in each of your booths. And this Tweeting effort can begin before the show, run during the show and afterwards. Make this newly formed relationship with your co-exhibitors an ongoing effort.

The following Tweet Fest is a step-by-step plan to create a BUZZ for your shows via Twitter. Using this technique, you will appear to your audience as a contributor rather than an over-zealous marketer. Go to the Let's Talk Trade Shows site to download a more complete version of my Tweet Fest, including examples of each step.

TWEET FEST ACTION PLAN

Step 1 – Determine which exhibitors you would like to invite.

You may have become friendly with exhibitors from previous years or remember neighboring exhibitors to your booth. You may have ongoing colleagues in your industry in mind. Look at the exhibitor directory if you are new to the show and see who might be a good partner for this effort.

The end result of this step is to have a list of 5, 10 or more fellow exhibitors to contact. Not everyone will accept this offer, so it would be best to have double the number you actually want.

Step 2 – Contact these exhibitors

Call those that you already know and alert them the forthcoming e-mail. For those you do not know, send an e-mail with a compelling Subject Line like:

I want to help you get more booth traffic – are you interested? Let's help each other get more booth traffic at the XYZ show!

Explain your idea to Tweet about them while they Tweet about you. Ask them to prepare some sample Tweets and suggest some possible dates for a conference call.

Step 3 – Have the conference call

If you or your company does not have conferencing capabilities, there are free services like www.freeconferencingcall.com where you can obtain a number that is yours to use for this call.

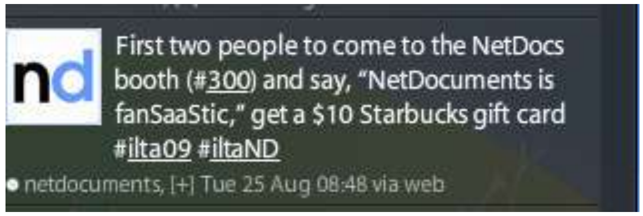
On the conference call, you will want to introduce everyone. Then discuss the number and timing of Tweets for each exhibitor.

Determine what unique # hash tag you will use. Give your fellow exhibitors all the information they will need in order to tweet about you: any demonstrations you will have, details on your product or service, and any special giveaways.

Step 4 – Collecting the Tweets and Timing Them

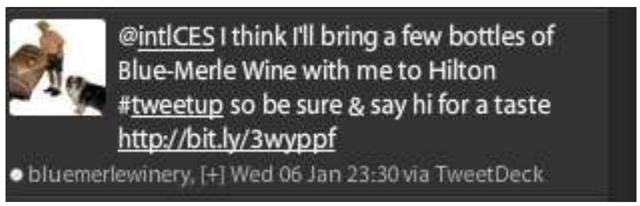
Have all of the exhibitors send their Tweets and the timing of them to you. Then you can use a service like Social Oomph and load the tweets, schedule them and deliver them during the show. http://www.socialoomph.com/

In addition, each exhibitor can add their own Tweets throughout the show in conjunction to these scheduled Tweets. Here is another example of a good Tweet below.



Step 5 – Consider a Tweet-Up with Your Fellow Exhibitors

Find a location where you would like to invite the show attendees to meet you for a Tweet-up. This is something else which can be coordinated with your Tweet Fest buddies.



Step 6 – Analyze the Results

A service like Social Oomph has tracking as a feature, so see what your results are. Then assess your booth traffic: how was it influenced by this marketing tactic?

Share the results via a blog post or trade journal outlet to gain further visibility.

You might want to start this plan with just one or two exhibitors to test it for your company. Or you can be the ring leader and get a group of exhibitors together and Tweet away.

THE BIG PICTURE: USING TWITTER AND OTHER MEDIA TO TAP INTO YOUR COMMUNITY

Michael Thimmesch is Skyline Exhibits' Director of Lead Generation and Industry Relations. He has over 20 years of marketing, and specifically, trade show marketing experience. Below are two distinct strategies he offers for tapping into a particular community of buyers and sellers via social networking:

There are two main strategies exhibitors can choose to leverage Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter before a trade show: Either exhibitors communicate with ***their own network*** *they've already built up over the long-term on those social networks, or quickly* ***tap into the groups*** *that already exist for their trade show on these 3 huge social media sites.*

1. Long Term: Build Your Own Social Media Following

The first strategy is a more long-term plan, because it takes time and effort to build up friends on Facebook, connections and followers on LinkedIn, and followers on Twitter. If you've already built up a following, then voila! It's a short-term plan for you.

When you have gained a group of followers, communicate to them before the show a potent reason to meet you in your booth, much like you would with other media. Overall, if your clients, prospects, and influencers are into social media, then building your own following is the way to go, and using your home-grown network for pre-show promotion is merely a bonus.

2. Short Term: Leverage Your Followers on Social Media Sites

The second strategy can be achieved in a relatively short time. It's to tie into the people who have connected to your exhibit's presence on these big three social networks.

For Twitter, leveraging the show's Twitter followers is achieved by sending tweets filled with great reasons to visit you at your booth, and including in your message the hashtag for the show (like # CES for the CES show) and hoping you get read by attendees who are reading that hashtag Twitter stream. If the show doesn't re-tweet your message, you can direct message the show's Twitter account, let them know you are an exhibitor, and ask them to re-tweet your message to share it with their followers.

Just remember that if you would consider a message to be "spammy" in an e-mail, it's even more so via social media. Thus, tread lightly with marketing messages in these arenas.

In summary, you will have greater interest from people in your own network (Strategy 1), but fewer of them will be going to the show. You will have greater opportunity for new connections via leaning on the show's network (Strategy 2), but will have to have an even more potent message to stand out -- just like all pre-show marketing.

In the short term, you can leverage the group of followers already congregating online for the show you will be exhibiting at. In the long term, it's best to build your own tribe on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, and invite these followers to meet you at the show as simply part of an ongoing conversation with them.

Please note that it take time and effort to build your twitter community or any social media community. If you have show that is just a month or two out and not started your Twitter following, it is going to be difficult to amass a huge audience. So I recommend that you get stared now and slowly but steadily build your followers.

A FREE E-BOOK "TWITTERING YOUR WAY TO TRADESHOW SUCCESS"

Tim Patterson is a trade show blogger and has the Trade Show Guy Blog. He is offering a free eBook on Twitter. Like this eBook all you have to do is supply him with your name and email address. Twittering Your Way to Trade Show Success is full of very useful material which will help you use this marketing tool wisely.

A CASE STUDY FROM MARKETINGSHERPA

A highly regarded research entity, MarketingSherpa, produces reports and other information on marketing in general. The following how they describe themselves:

> MarketingSherpa is a research firm specializing in tracking what works in all aspects of marketing (and what does not.)
>
> So, we're not an agency, consultancy or other vendor seeking your business. We're not even available for private research -- all our research is published for the entire MarketingSherpa community to

benefit from. Our goal - to give marketers of the world the stats, inspiration, and instructions to improve their results.

Our name "Sherpa" refers admiringly to the Sherpas of Nepal who guide climbers up Mount Everest. Our goal is to be your friendly native guides who help make your tough climb toward great marketing results easier by handing you research on 'what works.

The following material is from one of their many case studies. This one deals with trade shows and Twitter.

MARKETINGSHERPA CASE STUDY # CS31601:

Email, SMS and Twitter Power Trade Show Contest: 4 Steps to 4x ROI from Event Sponsorship

SUMMARY: The quest to stand out at a trade show often tempts marketers to offer splashy sweepstakes prizes with no relevance to their industry and no tie to their own products and services. This isn't the best way to generate qualified leads.

Read how a team of marketers designed a bingo-themed contest for an industry conference that highlighted the host's software and their own team's expertise using it. They used automated email to recruit players, generating a 70%+ visitor-to-registration form conversion rate. Then, they kept players engaged over two days by using SMS and Twitter to announce each drawing.

CHALLENGE: David Lewis, President, DemandGen, and his team wanted to make the most of their sponsorship at the 2009 Eloqua Experience conference.

"One of our challenges at this event was to stand out," says Lewis. "We wanted to showcase our skill set and make people go, 'Wow, these guys are smart, clever, and I'm having a lot of fun participating in their campaign."

A typical trade show sweepstakes offering a flashy prize wasn't going to be enough. They wanted to design a campaign that garnered attendees' attention, but also provided a relevant tie-in to the conference's primary theme: The use of marketing automation.

CAMPAIGN: The team designed a bingo game with a conference twist: The cards featured names and photographs of Eloqua employees, and drawings would be announced via SMS messages, Twitter and other channels during the two-day event. The first attendee to get five names in a row would win an iMac.

The team used an automated email campaign to invite conference attendees to register for the game. Here are the 4 steps they took to design, promote and run the campaign:

Step # 1. Design relevant game

Rather than a hosting a one-time sweepstakes drawing, the team wanted to create a contest that held attendees' attention over the course of the two-day event. They brainstormed several game ideas, before settling on the bingo theme because it was relatively easy for attendees to grasp.

To make the promotion relevant to the conference, they asked host Eloqua if they could use the names and images of the company's personnel on the bingo cards. That way, attendees (who were also Eloqua customers) would learn the names and titles of key people in the organization.

The team printed 500 bingo cards that contained a grid of 25 squares featuring a unique, random assortment of Eloqua staff members. Beneath the grid, they included copy that:

- Explained the game
- Described how to claim a prize
- Invited attendees to visit the team's booth to learn how the game worked
- Provided links to a game info website and Twitter feed

Step # 2. Pre-show email campaign to register game players

To promote the game, the team sent email invitations to the list of attendees who had registered for the conference. They designed a two-touch, automated campaign to encourage game sign-ups.

"There's no silver bullet. One email never does it," says Lewis

Email # 1

The first invitation, sent three days before the show, was an HTML email that announced the game, provided a brief description of how it would work, and included links to an online registration form (See Creative Samples).

Subject line: "Introducing Eloqua Bingo"

Email # 2

The second email was a reminder message sent early on the first day of the conference -- the day the contest was set to begin. This automatically-generated message was only sent to contacts who had not yet registered for the game.

This message was a text-only letter from Dave Lewis, written as a personal invitation to participate in the game.

> Sample text: "I certainly may have missed it, but I didn't see that you registered for Eloqua Bingo yet. Here is the link again if you need it."
>
> Subject line: "Are you going to play today?"

The call-to-action on both messages took users to a landing page with a game registration form. To sign up for the game, players were asked to provide:

- Company
- Name
- Work phone
- Mobile phone
- Email address

The form included a note promising players that their mobile phone numbers would be used only to receive SMS messages about the bingo game, and not be used for marketing after the event or shared with third parties.

Step # 3. Stagger bingo drawings over two days

Attendees who had registered for the game received their bingo cards with their event packets on registration.

The team had a standard bingo machine at their booth that contained balls numbered 0-75. The numbers corresponded to names on the Eloqua employee list that were featured on the cards, so when they drew a ball they could cross-check the number against a name.

Based on probability calculations, the team expected to have a winner after about 15 draws. Their goal was to have a winner hit "bingo" just prior to a final awards banquet, so they planned to stagger the name drawing over the course of the two day event:

- On the first day they pulled names during breaks and at lunch.

- On the second day they also pulled names during breaks, but accelerated the name picks just before the the banquet, announcing one every five minutes.

Step # 4. Send text messages and Twitter updates to game players

The team used SMS text messaging and Twitter to announce each name drawn and provide other game updates during the show:

- The first morning of the conference, the team sent a text message to all registered players reminding them that they had opted-in and the game was about to begin. This was an automated message tied to the email campaign and registration form.

- Then, after each drawing, the team sent a text message containing the name that had been pulled.

- The team also sent the names to a special Twitter account

- During the game, the team sent occasional messages recapping the names that had been pulled so far. They also sent status updates, such as a note informing players that a winner was likely to hit "bingo" during the banquet, and that they should keep their phones on.

RESULTS

"It definitely was a win for us," says Lewis. "It drove a ton a booth traffic and huge amount of awareness."

> Revenues from generated by the campaign were more than four times the cost of sponsoring the conference. And the team was asked to run a similar bingo game at a subsequent Salesforce.com Dreamforce event.
>
> The two-step automated email campaign delivered impressive open, clickthrough and conversion rates. Here are the metrics.
>
> First email:
>
> - 55.18% open rate
> - 23.24% email to form conversion
> - 77.65% Visitor to form conversion
>
> Second email:
>
> - 22.14% open rate
> - 8.4% email to form conversion
> - 80.49% visitor to form conversion

> And, yes, they achieved their goal of having a winner yell "BINGO!" just before the start of the final awards banquet.
>
> "We had the iMac there in banquet room and delivered it to her like the Publishers Clearing House prize patrol," says Lewis. "She was ecstatic."

Make sure you subscribe to MarketingSherpa's emails. They have valuable tips, research charts, reports and case studies which can aid your overall marketing knowledge.

Blatant Requests for PR via Twitter

A well known and highly respected PR person, Peter Shankman has written this post and asks us to steal it. The reason I am placing it here is to emphasize your voice and its authenticity as you Tweet.

STEAL THIS POST: How to respond when people ask you to tweet for them

I'm speaking at a conference in a few months – keynoting it, in fact. I'm obviously not going to mention which one, it could be any of the countless conferences at which I'm speaking over the next six months.

But the person running this conference has sent me (and my assistant) no less than five emails a piece asking me to blog, tweet, or otherwise do free PR for their conference. Knowing that I have over 50,000 followers, this conference organizer suspected that getting me to tweet about my attending would be an easy way for her to get free PR.

Ain't. Gonna. Happen.

I've built my Twitter following on what I preach in my speeches: Honesty, transparency, brevity, relevance, and top-of-mind presence – i.e., offering you valuable information in exchange for you letting me into your life. The day I start shilling for other people is the day my Twitter stream becomes nothing more than advertising, or than a press release submitted over a wire.

Ain't. EVER. Gonna. Happen.

So… Next time you're doing something and someone asks you to "just make a quick tweet" for them to promote for them, feel free to steal my email below.

> Dear XXXX:
>
> My assistant Meagan and I have received your multiple messages regarding my tweeting and blogging my speech at your conference.

I've built my Twitter following to well over 50,000 people by obeying some very simple rules, which I'll share with you here:

1) I don't blatantly self-promote

2) I post links of interest, and links of value

3) I don't waste people's time with repetitive posting, or tweets that serve no purpose

4) I don't double or triple post.

As we get closer to the date of the conference, I will make mention that I'm keynoting your event, in a way that benefits my followers. I will not, however, advertise for you to my followers, who sign up to receive valuable insight from me, not blatant advertisements.

I tweet about all my keynotes, XXXX. But I do it in my voice, on my time, in a way that's not blatantly advertorial, self-promoting, or self-serving. Those are my rules. I don't violate them. Ever.

I'm sure you understand.

Best regards,

Peter Shankman

EDITED TO ADD: I mistakenly left the person's first name in the second XXXX in the last paragraph. That was an editing mistake, and I never intended to "out" said person. I have no reason to. As such, I've removed the name, and all references to this conference or person. This post was designed to talk about my Twitter rules, not to take anyone to task.

Based on his advice make sure your Tweets are not meaningless and therefore viewed and Retweeted.

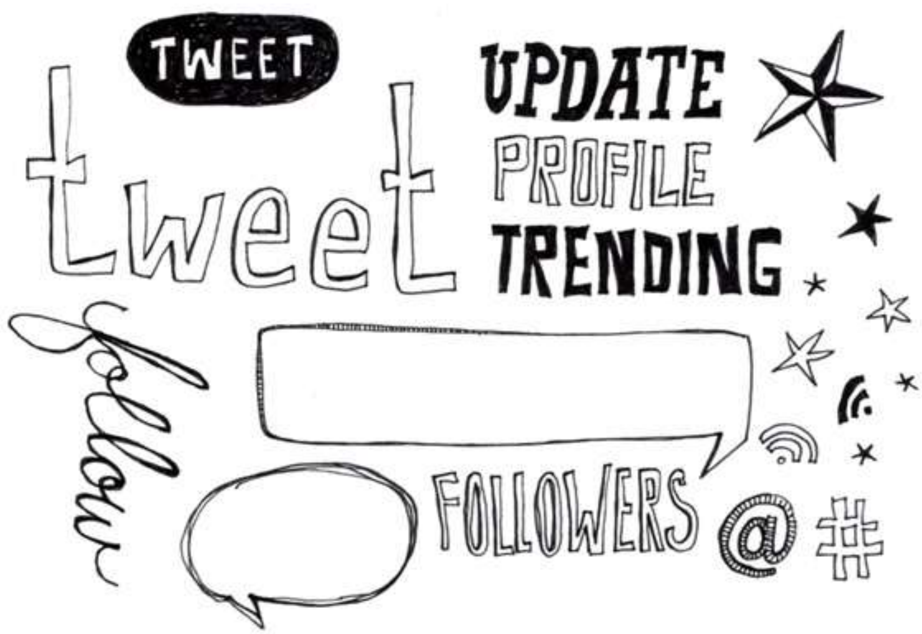
CAN THERE BE A BACKLASH FOR TWITTER?

If you think that there could be a swing to the opposite side regarding Twitter, the following blog post highlights what a conference provider really wanted - to have the full attention of his audience and not have then distracted with Tweeting.

Jonathan Fields is a former NYC private equity attorney turned lifestyle-entrepreneur, blogger, marketer, speaker and author of the book, Career Renegade: How to Make a

Great Living Doing What You Love (Broadway 2009). He writes (rants) about the crossroads between people, creativity, entrepreneurship and marketing at JonathanFields.com, contributes to HuffingtonPost.com and recently leads book marketing venture, TribalAuthor.com. Here is his blog post:

WHY I BANNED TWITTER AT MY LAST EVENT



Back in November 2009, I launched a book marketing venture that rapidly spawned a sold-out live event in NYC—Tribal Author Camp.

I did it because I love teaching, especially when I get to combine my jones for writing and experience as an author with marketing and social media. A big chunk of the event was focused on leveraging social media to build an author platform, then create a 3-stage launch campaign.

Which is why I got some raised eyebrows when my new book marketing mini-tribe turned to the first page of the manual to discover the following policy:

No live tweeting, Facebooking or blogging – BE HERE NOW! You can tweet, email and Facebook your ass off during the breaks! And, no recording devices, cell phones or pagers. Cow bells…absolutely. We can never have enough cow bell!

What the . . . .?!

Why would I ban social media and smart phones during an event that's all about marketing with those very tools?

Doesn't that just hurt me? I mean, I lose all that precious twitter hashtag back-channel buzz, I forgo the participants' followers wishing they were there and passing along a stunningly abundance stream of quotes to the huddled authorial tweet-loving masses.

That wasn't it, either.

Then what? What would drive me to make such a rash, horrifically unjustifiable policy? What on Earth would make me give up the marketing and PR benefit of a room full of people live-tweeting the event?

Was it that I'm just a control freak?

Nope, that wasn't it. Well, actually, I AM a control freak, but that wasn't behind the ban.

Was it that I didn't want my precious genius (read "inane rambling") leaking out to the unpaid masses?

Nope,

As Curly said in City Slickers…"One Thing."

I wanted everyone in the room to actually BE THERE.

I can't tell you how many times I've been to conferences or events where people are cycling mercilessly between tweeting every other line, taking notes and, can you believe, checking email. Then, they walk out of an event, you ask what it was about and the closest they can come is "I don't know, but I tweeted the hell out of the best lines!"

The reason I instituted a social media ban during my Tribal Author Camp event and gave up the potentially substantial opportunity for twitter hashtag fame was because it was far more important that I be able to give everyone in the room exactly what I promised. And, to do that, I had to create an environment that ensured minimum distraction, minimal task-switching and maximum engagement.

Because, if you're genuinely THERE, if you're engaged during the event, things sink in on a whole different level, questions arise at the time I am there to answer them and relationships are formed by listening, truly listening not just to me, but to everyone else who participates.

And now, the big question…did the twitter ban hold?

Pretty much. At one point, one participant came to me to share his guilt over tweeting something I said that, as he put it, just had to be shared. And, I did notice a bit of tweeting during the breaks. But, for the most part, the ban stood the test of ADD time. In the end, the result was an amazingly coherent, deeply engaged tribe who left, I hope, with not only great information and relationships, but a renewed sense of the need to occasionally disconnect, tune out…and drop in.

Now, I'm curious…

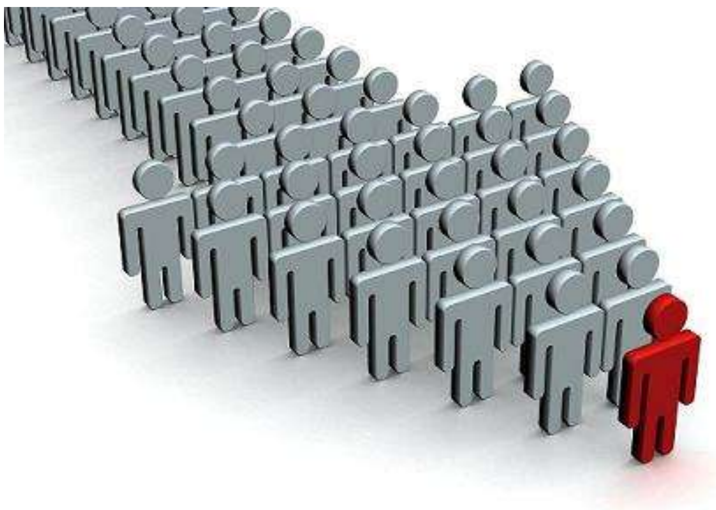
Have you ever suffered such indignity?

Had to endure an event without the refuge of twitter?

What do you think of my ban? I'm all ears…

TEST - TEST - TEST – TO ENSURE SMOOTH SAILING

As with any social media tool one must test and evaluate the results. Twitter can be a powerful tool to draw traffic to your booth and open the communication channels with a potential prospect.



GO-TO-MARKET INTERVIEW WITH PR NEWSWIRE ON TWITTER

The following article from *Go-To-Market Strategies* is a general discussion on Twitter, but I believe it is worthy for you to consider the implications discussed in this interview.

> **How to leverage the latest social media craze to benefit your business.**
> *By Rachel Meranus, Vice President-Public Relations, PR Newswire*
>
> Twitter has rapidly become the hot tool for marketing and communications , but many individuals and organizations are jumping into Twitter without a clear strategy in mind. Poor planning can prevent an organization from productively engaging with audiences or gaining influence on Twitter and, in some situations, can even lead to backlash against the organization.
>
> I spoke with Vicky Harres Akers, the voice behind PR Newswire's corporate Twitter account @prnewswire, about steps that companies can

take to most effectively build their brand on Twitter and avoid embarrassing missteps.

Rachel Meranus: What is the best way to get involved in the Twitter conversation?

Vicky Harres Akers: The key is to understand your audience and to give them content they want. The most important thing you will do using Twitter is to listen. Know what your audience is talking about. Know what they're saying about you and about the industry you function in.

Twitter happens in real time, so this is something you have to constantly be on top of. Make a mental note of what people react to and how they react. If you get "retweeted" (quoted by another user), it's a great honor. It is a validation of your contribution to the conversation. Someone thought what you said was of value, and now more people are getting to see your post via the feeds of those who retweet you.

Don't underestimate the value of promoting others in Twitter as well. If someone says something you find value in, consider retweeting it. If someone posts a link to an article you find interesting, pass it on to your followers and make sure you include the author's @twittername to promote him or her. It's part of being a good citizen in the "Twitterverse" (Twitter universe).

What do you do if someone says something negative about your brand on Twitter? It's not always wise to react or respond to negative tweets. Just as you would use good judgment in deciding to respond to any negative blog post, or bad press in general, you have to think carefully before choosing to confront a negative tweet about you or your brand. If you see a negative post about your brand, pause. Look into the issue. Are they right? Could your company have made a mistake? If you find out this is so, then by all means reach out to the negative twitterer and offer a solution or even an apology, if it is warranted. If the person's negative posting is a matter of opinion, it is highly doubtful that you're going to change anyone's mind. If it is a matter of misinformation being stated, it might be better to just post the correct information without directing it to anyone in particular.

How can a company or brand benefit from Twitter? The # 1 use for Twitter is and always shall be a means to listen to your customers, clients, colleagues, industry leaders and anyone else who might comment on your product or business. Twitter is about networking and knowledge sharing. If you approach Twitter as just another medium for broadcasting your company's communications, you will have missed the point completely, and it's doubtful that you'll build any following.

The uses for Twitter are without limit. You just have to find your niche. You have to ask, "What can I (my company) offer by being on Twitter?" Some will share knowledge, and others will just use Twitter as a way of being available to customers. Either way, as long as you are actually listening and staying engaged, you will benefit.

One of the best things Twitter can do for a company is simply to humanize it. Allowing a real person to put a voice to an otherwise impersonal entity can give a dimension to your relationships with clients that is otherwise not possible. Some of the more successful brands on Twitter allow and encourage a multitude of voices from within the corporate walls to twitter, not only engaging clients, but also each other as well.

How do you find out what other people are saying? There are several tools you can use to monitor what is being said, and new applications are popping up all the time. The most basic and easy to use is the one now owned by Twitter itself--the Twitter search engine. Simply type a search term in the window, and the results will be displayed. It also will give you current popular searches on the right, which gives you an idea of what the hot topics are at that moment. I also like to use monitter.com, which gives you the opportunity to search multiple terms at the same time.

How do you build an audience on Twitter? Before you actively try to build an audience, post a few tweets to familiarize yourself with the process, and spend some time reading what others in your industry are talking about on Twitter. Use the "Find People" search function at the top of your Twitter page to look for people you know will want to follow you back: people within your company, current clients and colleagues. Send a few @ replies out to people who are following you. Respond to things they are talking about. When they in turn respond to you with an @ reply, the people following them will take notice of you and may choose to follow as well.

It's also a good idea to look at whom the people you know are following. That can give you ideas about whom you want to search for. Use the Twitter search function to find subjects relative to your industry and see who's talking about them. Remember that conversation is very important. If all you do is post your thoughts and ideas without engaging anyone in conversation, you're just a broadcaster. Eventually, if you are a well-known brand and if you do things right on Twitter, new people will start following you every day.

What are things that brands should avoid on Twitter? *Don't be a robot.* Too many companies represent themselves on Twitter by spewing automated and static information, or authorized quotes from the PR department. These only serve to keep the brand parked neatly in dry dock, gathering dust. Most people who twitter do it for the human connection.

Don't bring up politics and religion. Your mother told you this a long time ago, and it's still good advice; unless, of course, your business is politics or religion. In that case, go for it. Otherwise you are just going to alienate half your followers, maybe more. People are passionate about their political and religious beliefs; if you are representing a brand you will do it a great disservice by taking a position on either subject.

Don't rant about other brands or people. Think of Twitter as a ship we are all traveling on. You have to play nice with others or you'll be shoved aside and ignored--or, worse, made to walk the plank. Besides, you never know when you might end up doing business with someone you now consider a competitor.

Don't be a pessimist. No one wants to listen to someone who keeps whining or pointing out all the things that are going wrong in the industry or the world. If you want people to follow you and listen, look for the positive. Sure, there will be times when you have to talk about things that aren't encouraging or upbeat; some situations demand a solemn tone. But don't make this a theme. Don't make it what you are about. Remember, anyone can whine and complain; a leader offers solutions.

TWITTER'S POPULARITY IS STILL GROWING

If you have a Twitter following – keep growing it and nurturing it so it can pay off for you at your next event. For those who are new to the Twitter experience, it takes time to grow your network. An instant Twitter following is unrealistic. Like any solid network it takes time, effort and constant attention to grow it into a robust machine that will assist you in your marketing.

As you are collecting information from various people [name, phone numbers, etc.], I would recommend you add their Twitter handle. So make sure you database or CRM system has a field in it for Twitter.

Check out the various groups of event marketing folks on Twitter. The main ones are:

- # eventprofs
- # tsnn
- # tradeshows
- # iaee

I use my TweetDeck and have these groups already showing when I open it up. It makes it easy to re-tweet a message or assess what is going on in the community.

Happy Tweeting!!

Check out the Let's Talk Trade Shows website for free and paid webinar education.

http://www.letstalktradeshows.com/webinars-2/

CHAPTER EIGHT - SOCIAL MEDIA & EVENTS

"What happens in Vegas…" or more appropriately, "What happens at the event often stays at the event," could be said of exhibiting. This statement is unfortunate considering the huge investment made by exhibitors at any given event.

However, this doesn't have to be the case. By using social media, exhibitors can enhance, expand and extend the event experience for attendees and outside participants as well. Videos (YouTube), Photos (Flickr), Blogs, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, private social networks, etc. can all be potent additions to your strategy. Remember, an event is a point in time while relationships are long-term. When you engage and interact with your communities both on and off line, you improve the ROI of your event.

EXHIBITOR MEDIA GROUP'S SOCIAL MEDIA IN MARKETING SURVEY

In January 2010 the *Exhibitor Magazine's,* Exhibitor Media Group in conjunction with GetSynchronicity conducted a survey to learn how companies use social-media tools sites and tools for marketing purposes, including exhibit and event-marketing campaigns. Published by EXHIBITOR Media Group, the study is made possible through sponsor support from the following companies: GetSynchronicity, Skyline Exhibits, Echelon Design, and Exhib-It Tradeshow Marketing Experts.

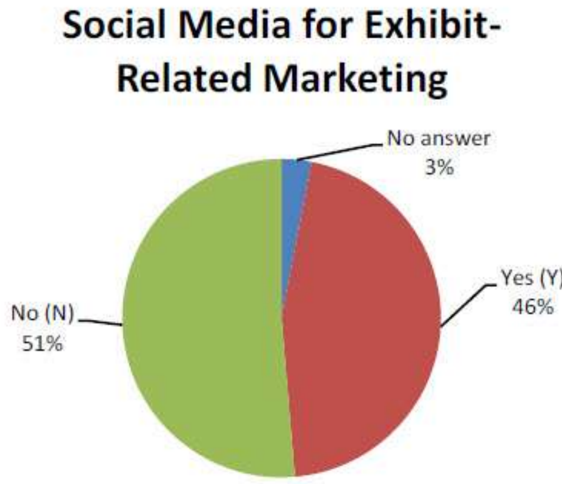
In the Executive Summary of this report they share:

> Those who are tapping into the marketing potential of social-media applications claim increased brand awareness, enriched relationships with clients and prospects, additional press coverage, increased event attendance, increased booth traffic, and even increased sales as direct results of their campaigns.
>
> The so-called "free" services offered via social-media sites don't come without their own fixed costs, as nearly a third of respondents currently using social media report spending six or more hours per week strategizing, executing, and monitoring their social-media presence. And nearly 10 percent of respondents dedicate 21 hours or more, per week, to their social-media campaigns.

To obtain the full report go to www.exhibitoronline.com.

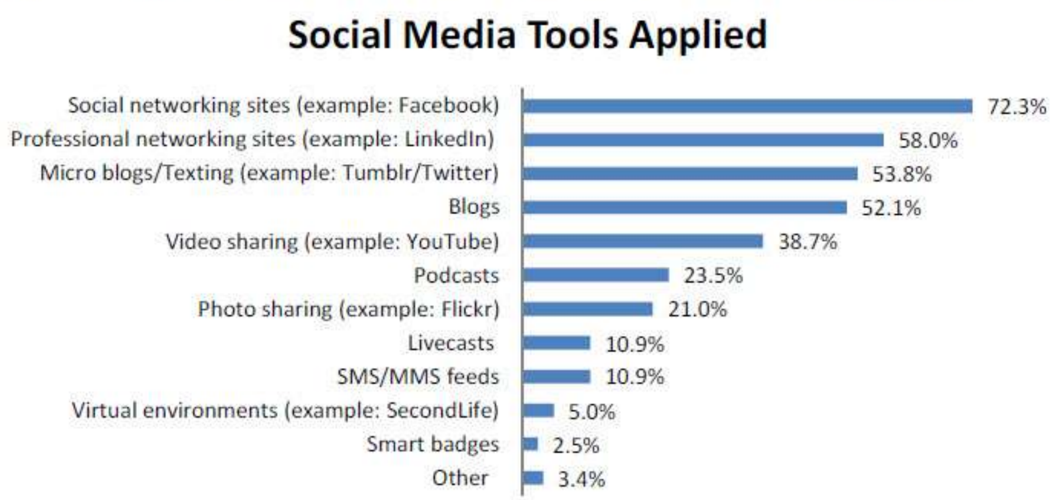
Below are just a couple graphs from the study to set the tone of this Chapter. As you can view, only 46% have used social media for an event. I believe that this number will grow in the next year or so.

Has your company used social media as part of its exhibit-marketing efforts before, during, or after a trade show?



Currently, nearly half of all exhibiting companies (46%) report using social media for marketing as part of their exhibit promotion efforts.

Which of the following social media tools did you use as part of your exhibit-marketing efforts?



As seen with general marketing applications, social networking sites, such as Facebook, represent the most common tool used by companies to promote their trade show presence.

Video and Its Impact on Trade Shows

In May 2010 the National Restaurant Association used a social media gathering to add fun and excitement to their event. They had a "flash mob dance" outside the exhibition hall that was well attended and garner a wealth of positive press. The term flash mob dance is fairly new and it means that a group of individuals gather and dance together. A definition from Wikipedia states that: A **flash mob** (or **flashmob**) is a large group of people who assemble suddenly in a public place, perform an unusual and pointless act for a brief time, then disperse.

Michelle Bruno of the Bruno Group wrote about this remarkable dance on a blog post which was featured on TSNN's online site, www.tsnn.com. Below is that blog post:

> **How Tradeshows Got Their Groove Back**
>
> Trade shows used to be fun. Attendees didn't mind getting out of the office for a few days. There was plenty to see at the show, and the booth babes were easy on the eyes. Exhibitors offered entertainment, and R2D2-like robots wandered the aisles in search of unsuspecting victims.
>
> At some point things got serious. Feminists (I think) complained about the booth babes, large corporations and MBA grads replaced the event entrepreneurs and the words "trade show" became synonymous with "bottom line." Some shows that became too well attended and little raucous (remember the original E3?) were canceled.

Then came the great recession of 2008. Event organizers were consumed with trying to hang on to exhibitors and keep every last attendee on the rolls. Despite their efforts, show floors shrunk, attendance declined and there were days when it seemed the air was sucked right out of the proverbial room. Between the corporate takeover and the economic woes, trade shows were officially declared “unfun.”

Then a month or two ago, some organizers started using Foursquare as the cornerstone of booth check-in schemes where attendees were rewarded with premiums for visiting exhibitor booths. After that, the National Restaurant Association’s flash mob dance set to Lady Gaga’s “Let’s Dance” was a megahit in the fun department. Other event organizers are planning similar audience participation maneuvers as we speak.

I am officially declaring that tradeshows have their groove back. Blame it on social media, a new generation of event managers or a final lifting of the pall that had descended over the industry. Besides, who ever said you can’t have fun and do business? If that were true there would never be another golf game between salesmen and their clients ever again.

NRA’s flash mob was the secret signal to the industry to put your thinking caps on and come up with something fun. That Foursquare idea isn’t going away. What about giant-screen social games for a huge audience of attendees or attendees running around with “pokens” connecting like mad?

Trade show organizers have to make an effort to get their groove back. I'm not talking about clowns and jugglers or marching bands. This is a new brand of fun that involves large-scale audience participation and engagement. Think of it as a team-building exercise on steroids. Here's some planning advice:

1. Add fun as a priority along with profit, brand, sustainability and other long-term objectives.
2. Have a "fun" committee to plan and execute audience participation experiences.
3. Ask your key vendors (especially social media and technology providers) to include something fun in their offerings.
4. Master the element of surprise. Nothing is more fun than something exciting and unexpected.
5. Tie the fun experience into your show's theme or market segment to make it more memorable.
6. Keep it simple. Attendees aren't receptive to anything expensive, complex or wasteful.
7. Make it highly participatory. There is extreme value in a shared experience. Anyone can hire a rock band but the perfectly executed audience participation stunt is gold.

I think I can speak for the entire industry when I say that this recession is so 2008. The NRA flash mob was just the beginning of putting fun back into trade shows. The next generation of attendees will expect it. In reality, trade shows are one big social game. Move aside MBAs. This industry has got its groove back. Booth babes anyone?

The Flash Mob dance can be located here.

Capturing the Heartbeat of the Show Floor

In a blog post I wrote for the CEIR blog, I shared the changes show management are making to embrace social media and its outlets, especially video. Below is that post:

Using video to capture and retain the interest of current and future attendees is on the rise. With mobile devices being everywhere the opportunity for filming is so easy.

Jason McGraw, CTS, CAE, the senior vice president of Expositions for InfoComm International shared in the webinar last week, Ensuring Exhibitor Success, that they have relaxed their rules about videotaping on the show floor. In the past it was restricted. But now, for non-commercial use, anyone can get their flip camera out and shoot some film.

Jason shares that an industry online publisher and professional AV industry consultant Gary Kayye, producer of rAVe, launched his rAVe Now online social video coverage of the InfoComm 2010 show floor with eight college interns who took flip cameras and took hundreds of short videos, testimonials, product reviews, interviews, etc. to capture the color and excitement from the InfoComm show floor. They uploaded their videos regularly throughout the show and also tweeted like constantly. They also did a number of tweet-ups for sponsors in their booths. To date they have 470 videos from InfoComm!! Here is a link to their site with the videos. An example of this short and sweet video is below.

Jason also shares that "for years we've had an "InfoComm TV News" daily TV program produced by one of our industry publishers who covers the show floor and events and puts exhibitors' advertising spots into 30-minute daily programs that we show online, around the halls and lobby areas, in hotel rooms and on the shuttle buses." These are archived and accessible online after the show - here's a link to this year's programs.

How are you using videos to create excitement and extending the life of your show?

You should check with your show's management on the rules and regulations they have about video within the exhibition hall. Then bring your flip camera or camcorder and use it to spread the excitement.

CHRIS BROGAN ON WHAT HE PACKS FOR EVENTS – MAYBE WE SHOULD TOO

In a recent Chris Brogan blog post he has some ideas for you. For those of you who do not know who Chris Brogan – he is "Mr. Social Media." He is a bestselling author of the books: *Trust Agents and Social Media 101*.

[A Media Maker's Event Kit]

I blog and shoot video at events I attend, whether or not I'm part of the official team. Think about it: there are all these really great people attending an event, who would make for great content for your space. Why wouldn't I try to tap into those minds? And in today's world, it's a lot easier to travel and make media because everything is smaller and lighter. Here's what I pack for events, with the mindset of a media maker.

The Bag:

I use the Ogio Fred Couples Epic backpack. It has lots of pockets, doesn't weigh a lot when empty, and has all the right padding to keep everything safe. A good bag is worth its weight when traveling and especially when making media. You want something that will give you access.

The Camera

I shoot with the Panasonic Lumix DMC-LX3. I like it because it shoots in high definition and also widescreen, which makes my movies look a lot more professional. You could also just use the Flip MinoHD or the Kodak Zi8, which both are great cameras. The Flip charges via USB. The Kodak takes standard batteries. My Lumix has a special kind of battery. This ends up mattering.

My Lumix and the Kodak Zi8 both accept SD cards, and I carry around a few 16GB high definition cards. The MinoHD has on-board storage so you have to be a bit more picky about what you shoot, but I've never run out of room, provided I delete stuff when I get back to my room and upload it to my laptop.

Three quick tips to using a video camera for interviews:

- Sound is more important than the picture quality when shooting video. Stand close to the person you're interviewing. Keep the camera pointed at their face.
- Lighting is the second most important requirement. Try to shoot your video in well lit places.
- Keep your interviews brief, and watch your "ums." People love watching snips of interviews, but don't really want to watch a "rambler."

But maybe you're a blogger. How are you going to capture all the stories coming out of the event?

Two Ways to Blog or Tweet at Events

I'm currently of two minds about blogging and tweeting at events. I just purchased the Apple iPad and it makes a great blogging tool, especially if you buy the docking keyboard or use a standard Apple Bluetooth keyboard. You can blog either live into your blogging software without much fuss. You can tweet just as easily from the iPad, so that's all well and good.

But, if you want to carry only one device, because the iPad doesn't let you upload media and doesn't let you edit video, it's not the right tool for the job. You'll still have to use a laptop or a netbook.

I'm currently using the Apple MacBook Pro 15″, which has an SD card slot right in the side and lets me do my video editing, as well as do things like blog and tweet. If I currently were forced to pick which device to carry, it would have to be the MacBook Pro for right now. I just can't justify the iPad because I'm doing video.

So, if you're NOT using video, then you might find the iPad a great alternative to lugging around a big laptop, especially if you add the keyboard to it.

Bring Your Own Network

What happens at every big show? The wifi goes down. It's pretty much a fact of life and never has anything to do with the venue, per se. In a world where our phones, our iPads and our laptops all are hungrily attacking the few Internet connections made available, we have an overpopulation problem in networking.

Solution to all that: bring your own.

I really like the Novatel Mifi device, which I use via Verizon Wireless. It delivers me 3G wifi via a cellular connection for up to 5 devices, so I can hook my laptop, my iPad, and even my camera up to the Web with this one slender device. I can keep the Mifi in my pocket, it's so small, and that keeps me from losing it somewhere.

Another power tip: you can make a couple of new friends if you're willing to share your access to the Mifi when the system goes down.

Extras You Haven't Thought About

Besides bringing some spare batteries, charging cables and maybe some extra storage media, it's important to think about a few extras that might improve your experience with making and posting media. Here are some ideas. It'd be great to have yours in the comments section:

• Mints. It's amazing how often we have to keep our breath clean for all these interviews.

• Try an www.eyefi.com card. It lets you shoot photos and push them straight to the web via a wifi connection.

• An external microphone. If you're using the Kodak Zi8 you can use an external mic, and it makes a world of difference in the sound quality. Just make sure you cover both you and your subject during the shoot.

• $5.00 for coffee or soda pop. Nice to offer to buy someone a coffee for the interview (gives them context to go with you sometimes).

• A www.tubemogul.com account for uploading video to several sites at once and a www.pixelpipe.com account for uploading photos to several sites at once.

Media Extends Everything

By getting interviews with interesting people at your events, you bring the event further out to people who might want to attend next year. If you're an attendee or an exhibitor, taking video and making other media at events gives you more to share with your prospects and lets you build a platform for sharing the ideas of others, as well as your own ideas.

If you see me around at a conference, of course I'll do a video with you. It's what I do. Let's make media together, shall we?

LinkedIn

I recently held a series of interviews with social media marketing expert Ian McGonnigal, SVP of Client Strategy and Brand Performance at Jack Morton Worldwide, a marketing leader in his field. Below are excerpts from our discussion on social media and exhibiting:

Extending Your Event Using Social Media

Joyce: How does social media amplify event marketing?

Ian: It's all about building a community around your event or taking your event and plotting it into a community, and the first way that social media amplifies event marketing is through engagement. And what it does is it allows your attendees and people who haven't attended, quite frankly, [to] become more engaged in the process. So they might be building their own content [or] immersing themselves in the content.

It's a way to engage people beyond the proximity of an event so I'm talking about the physical states as well as the time line of the event because an event is a singular point in time. That said, by having different tools available for people to engage in social media about the subject of your event, you'll [be] a lot better off. So this might be as simple as [a] Twitter hashtag that you have for your event, it might be a Facebook page you setup, it might be a LinkedIn group that you setup, it might be your own social network that you happen to have… or a random social network. Whatever the case, it's important to understand that if you're able to create the platforms for people to engage with you socially, it's going to go a long way as far as driving a further engagement of what's going on in the social media beyond the physical constraints of your event.

The second is interaction and I think that beyond engaging people more deeply, people are now able to interact with your brand, with your content, with your subject matter, with anything that you have going on in your event. So if you do create these tools and you are able to build some sort of interaction, that's fantastic. Interaction can happen online, through a mobile device or on the show floor.

For example, you might have TweetDeck set up in a corner of your booth. You might have a kiosk where people can tweet what's going on with the show or maybe it's a way of integrating YouTube or Flicker, in the places that you can share other content. Whether [its tweets], whether its photo, whether its video, [media can] really help drive that interaction between your community and your brand and with each other.

Immersion: A Function of Social Media

The third area is immersion and I think that social media really does a good job of driving immersion for people. So instead of it being a 1-way conversation where people are listening to what you have going on and observing what you have going on with the event, immersion allows people to actively participate. So, not only are you really using all five senses at the event from an experiential perspective, but you can then immerse people beyond the physical constraints of the event yet again by having and participating online and through social media.

Joyce: Give us another example of immersion.

Ian: A good example of immersion is if I am in a speaking section and the speaker is saying something very relevant and perhaps they have TweetPoll out there, you can then become part of how the speaker presents their presentation because they'll do a poll using a mobile device and you'll answer the question that's being polled and all of a sudden the speaker has a great understanding of what that audience make up is or how you answer that question and they can then tailor their presentation based on the interaction that you've had at the event through that device.

Joyce: Got it. Thank you.

Ian: The fourth way that social media enhances events or amplifies events is through internalization. I've always been a big fan of teaching because as we all know, the more you teach, the more you learn. If you're able to translate and understand content and teach it to another person, you will internalize that information. An example of that would be again, if you're at a speaking session and you're listening intently to the panel discussion, if you are re-tweeting some of the key quotes or some of the key ideas that that speaking panel is participating in, then you'll be able to internalize that as well as share it across your community.

Joyce: Right. But there's another whole audience that couldn't make the show for some reason. Maybe it was distance, maybe it was timing. And to have that immersion in the community and putting information out [there] gives them a sense that they were actually there and that excitement that you're building around your exhibit at the show can be extended beyond the floor.

Ian: I'd like to borrow from a movie quote from "Gladiator" and it goes something like, "What we do in life echoes in eternity." And the way I like to think about it is, 'what you do online… goes in eternity.' So, if you're able to participate and be at a physical event, that's one thing. If you're able to share that event online, then that event now has a sense of permanence and people for generations to come can see what that content is whether or not they were there at the event.

Joyce: Good point.

Social Media Generates Opportunity

Ian: And finally, social media amplifies event marketing through extension. It extends the event. So it gives an event a long tail. It also can be used to drive awareness about leadership and audience generation before the event. So when you think about an event again being a physical point in time and physical proximity, what social media does is it actually extends that investment in that content so that you had a higher return on your investment and you're able to share with a wider audience for a longer period of time.

Joyce: Good. And about that extension, that's one of the things especially as being in the audience and hearing a good speaker, you learn so much from the other questions that somebody else posed and you go, "I didn't even think about that." And to extend that conversation further beyond the walls of that particular timeframe I think is really important.

Ian: Makes a lot of sense and gives people an opportunity to ask questions and comment on the session even after it has taken place. So if you go to Show Blogs and that sort of thing, you'll find people will post questions and ideas and thoughts and extended conversations that didn't happen at the event but [have] a lot of value to the community and the subject matter at large.

The Uses of LinkedIn at Trade Shows

Joyce: Talk a bit about LinkedIn and how you can use it around your events.

Ian: Many of you are familiar with LinkedIn. LinkedIn is the business-focus social network. And as such, it attracts a lot of interesting people. People that are within your niche, people who are outside of your niche, but it's all a business community. So generally, you don't see people on LinkedIn talking about being stuck in traffic. You don't see them talking about eating oatmeal that morning for breakfast. We can see them talking about in…not real time but more…status time what kinds of things they are working on which is really interesting because it gives you a good sense [of] what's happened in the business community.

Now LinkedIn has hundreds of different tools available within [its] applications that really can help you succeed as a professional and as an experiential or [event] marketer…For events, I think there are many different things that you can do and some are very strategic, some are tactical. One thing you can do is participate in groups. Now there are hundreds, if not thousands, of groups in LinkedIn.

The first thing a group gives you is access. So you have access to people who aren't in your direct network which is fantastic. It also gives you a broad framework for subject matter that you'll be able to post relevant information or read relevant information. But one of the falls of LinkedIn here is when people are posting information, it tends to be, unlike Twitter, a little bit more self-serving. So people do tend to spend a lot of energy on LinkedIn speaking about things that will give them satisfaction in a narcissistic way.

So I think that the first thing you need to do is create a group for your event on LinkedIn or at least participate in those groups that talk about the subject matter around your event. There's [also] an events application on LinkedIn. Quite frankly, it's a way to post your event, the date and time, the location and that sort of thing. Another way to use LinkedIn is through thought leadership and there's a plug-in for the slide show application which allows you to share relevant content through PowerPoint and what have you through a slide show. So you could have your speakers and presentations posted [online through LinkedIn].

So it's quite simply a way that you can dump content to your audiences very easily instead of having everybody's e-mail address and sending it out that way or using an FTP site. Another great application I like in LinkedIn a lot is the opportunity to link to your blog. So if you establish a blog for your event - whether it's on TypePad or Wordpress - then you would be able to have that blog feed on the profile of the page of the events.

Functions of Polling on LinkedIn

Ian: It's always good to have a quick understanding of whether your audience is thinking about a certain subject matter. So you might put a poll out there about "Is anybody interested in this speaker versus that speaker?" Or "what's more important content for you to save your event?" Or "What is the mix of what's happening on the exhibit floor versus in the educational sessions you might want to add?" So it's a good, quick way to poll your audience if you have a good following in your group.

Joyce: So, if I put a poll out there and nobody's responding, how do I get people to a) know about the poll and then b) get them to respond?

Ian: That's really a good question and I think that there's a bit of a fallacy out there that people believe if you build it, they will come. So if you have a social network presence, if you have a poll out there, if you post a blog post, it's not as simple as just having it out there and all of a sudden, people will find it. You need to promote it. And there are several ways to promote it. You can promote it by searching for people who might be interested. Either e-mailing them or tweeting them or what have you. It might be that you advertise it using LinkedIn advertising which is one of those other pieces I was going to talk about. So may be purchasing tiles or banners or that sort of thing. It might be sending a note or a message to the groups that are interested in the subject matter you have. So again, if you build it, they might come. But it's always important to promote any kind of content you have whether it's a poll or otherwise.

Important Tidbits to Remember When Using LinkedIn

Ian: When we think about LinkedIn, there's a wonderful audience there with a whole bunch of data on who they are, what their jobs are, what they're interested in. So that becomes a very effective way of marketing. There's Advanced Search [function on LinkedIn] and I can't say enough about Advanced Search or Search in any social media. I fully believe that Search is the future of most marketing. I think in the near future, as we've seen with Google and others, that search will benefit and enable companies to find you and serve up their products to you.

And then status of course, the LinkedIn status isn't as popular as something like a Facebook status or Twitter status. People don't change it that often. I've seen most people posting statuses once a week or once a month to just let people know what's going on. It's not the kind of community where people are actively engaged all the time. It's more of a destination that people refer to from time to time almost like an Encyclopedia.

And then finally, networking sections. Now you're thinking about LinkedIn in terms of events, why not use LinkedIn as a place to drive a face-to-face networking session at your event. So if you have subject matter that people are rallying around as part of your event, invite the groups that are talking about that to come to your event and then participate in a LinkedIn networking session now that they're connected or will be connected online.

Let's follow-up this interview with one of Ian's blog posts on LinkedIn:

Ian McGonnigal's 13 Ways to Use LinkedIn to Support Your Events

LinkedIn is an amazing tool. Here are some quick ideas on how you can use LinkedIn to support your event marketing efforts:

1. Create a group for your event: You can invite people to join your group, start discussions around the event or event-related topics, give important news updates to your audiences or promote your event to other groups.

2. Add the event to the Events application: This is an easy one. List your event so your audiences can find out about it.

3. Use the Slideshare, Google Presentation or Box.net applications to post relevant event presentations and other content: There is no better way to give your event a long tail and extend the return on investment than by sharing content after the event. Presentation sharing is an often overlooked channel for content distribution.

4. Use the Wordpress or BlogLink application to promote event blogs: If your event blogs are on Wordpress or TypePad, this is a great way to integrate your thought leadership into your LinkedIn presence; or to drive traffic to your event site. This will also help improve your event SEO results.

5. Use the Company Buzz application to promote the event: This is basically a Twitter Feed. This gives you another opportunity to link all of your social media content together and help your audience participate in everything that's going on around your event.

6. Use Huddle Workspaces to manage event logistics with your community: This simple but powerful tool allows you to coordinate just about everything with your teams.

7. Use LinkedIn Polls to survey your audience: LinkedIn polls are a really easy way to ask simple questions of your audiences, or start some interesting conversations to engage with your communities.

8. Use the TripIt application to coordinate travel schedules: This can be very useful for understanding what's happening with your team, speakers, exhibitors, attendees, etc.

9. Purchase advertising tiles from LinkedIn to promote the event: LinkedIn advertising is highly targeted based on user profiles. This is a great way to get your event promoted to the specific audiences you want to reach.

10. Use Advanced Search to identify attendees, speakers, exhibitors, analysts, press, media, partners, or other interested parties for events: Wow! Instead of audiences searching for relevant content, imagine having relevant content finding them! Search is an amazing tool that is often overlooked in the event marketing community as a way to drive audiences.

11. Use the Answers section to post and answer relevant questions around the event: Compelling questions can drive engagement and conversations between your brand and your audiences as well as build "community" around certain subject matter. This is a great way to participate in the conversation. You can also search answers to find out who might be most interested in learning more about your event.

12. Use Status updates to promote the event: Another easy one. Post relevant information daily on what's happening around the event.

13. Create "LinkedIn Networking Sessions" at your events: Take LinkedIn off line! Encourage attendees to meet face-to-face at the event and beyond. You can also invite other related LinkedIn groups to participate in the live meet-ups.

LinkedIn is so much more than a digital Rolodex. With the right integration into your event program, it can be a very powerful tool.

There are so many uses of LinkedIn that your marketing team should evaluate and test to determine what works best for you. By testing and testing again you can see which tactic has the best impact.

How Technology and Knowledge is Changing the Event Industry

The following is an inspiring story of initiative which took place earlier this year. A major snow storm cancelled an event. Many natural acts of God have cancelled events. But what is unusual about this story, a new event was born. Michelle Bruno in her blog A Fork in the Road tells this wonderful story.

The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: How # Untech10 Was Launched and What it Means to a Changing Industry

Posted on February 23rd, 2010 by Michelle

Almost two weeks after Social Fish Maddie Grant and Lindy Dreyer with a host of technology providers launched what they dubbed #Untech10 in defiance of the major snowstorm that forced the cancellation of ASAE's 2010 Technology Conference and Expo, the potential long-term impact of their efforts has become clear.

There are a couple of great posts on other blogs about how things came together. Essentially, according to Grant, the unconference was launched with a Twitter hashtag, some nimble volunteers (willing to go without much sleep) and $6,000 (all donated by sponsors) and ASAE's unofficial blessing.

The original ASAE conference was scheduled to open on Wednesday, February 10. The day before, there were rumors about a possible cancellation as "Snowpocalypse" was preparing to engulf Washington, DC. Rather than waiting, Grant, Dreyer and Aaron Biddar of The Port, hatched a Plan B and asked the Twitterati to stand by.

By mid-afternoon on the Tuesday the 9th, ASAE formally announced the cancellation and plans for the unconference were put fully into motion with help from exhibitors already on site when the cancellation hit. The list included:

The Port's Biddar handled hotel negotiations, sponsorship and installed cameras and broadcasting equipment at the Renaissance Hotel.

Omnipress set up the #Untech10 web site to serve at the online home for the event and organize the schedule, speakers, participants and content. The site was up and running by 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday.

Eventbrite offered registration for the live participants.

Peach New Media provided the live streaming of content alongside a Twitter feed.

NFI Studios sponsored the happy hour and reimbursed travel expenses for association executives.

Avectra offered their Webex account as a back-up system for the presentations and provided food, signage and miscellaneous support on site.

Speakers who had been on the schedule for the original conference were given the opportunity to present their sessions on Thursday before a hybrid (live and virtual) audience or Friday before a virtual only audience. Grant's crew took special pains to be inclusive of all presenter volunteers while providing a broad range of topics. Some presenters with similar topics were grouped together in panels. The traditional town hall meeting scheduled for Wednesday evening at the original conference was replicated at # Untech10 using a fishbowl concept recently introduced by social media and event industry authority Samuel J. Smith.

While the logistics were unfolding, Tweeters who followed the #Untech10 hashtag were given an unprecedented glimpse of the behind the scenes action as @maddiegrant, @Lindydreyer and others tweeted a play by play. #Untech10 opened at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, February 11 to 75 live attendees and 425 virtual participants.

In the end Grant was amazed with the results. “All of the vendors, some of whom were competitors, came together. It was almost like they were showing off by doing instead of just selling. The stuff that always goes wrong didn’t. Even the food never ran out,” she says.

Grant and Dreyer’s success with #Untech10 has much larger implications for the meetings industry. #Untech10 is the real-life story of what happened when the patients took over the asylum, especially patients who never entertained the notion of failure.

Associations must change. So many associations (and event organizations) take conservative approaches, focus on details that turn out to be less important and find the risk of failure too great to try anything new or spontaneous for fear of ruffling some board members’ feathers. ASAE made a bold move when they allowed (although unable to endorse or assist) the members to run with #Untech10 without seeing it as competition but as a way to meet the needs of their community.

Generation X works differently. Grant, Dreyer and others saw the cancellation of the conference as an incredible opportunity to serve their community, shape the future of hybrid meetings and showcase the technology that will one day be the norm rather than the exception. In true Generation X style, the door opened and rather than wait for group consensus, feasibility studies or permission, they ran through it with little more than their smartphones and chutzpah.

Exhibitors will sell differently in the future. The vendor companies that stepped up for #Untech10 with people, platforms and money are the other heroes of the story. In true social media style, they allowed themselves to be exposed, to risk failure, to be transparent and to sell by example.

Now that we’ve learned to live without, we may do without. In the future, it may not be necessary to have large gatherings of people in order to serve and build the community. We all love face-to-face but the success of #Untech10 revealed that meeting stakeholders are just as responsive to virtual meetings as live ones given the right conditions. The focus on “butts in seats” or “heads in beds” is quickly turning to butts and heads.

Spontaneity is the new black. Maddie Grant and I discussed the fact that #Untech10 was sort of like the conference version of a “rave” or the mobile catering trucks that drive around Los Angeles tweeting their locations and daily specials to followers who line up for the goods. Meetings in the future will have more spontaneity brought to them by the audience who will participate more and in greater numbers than before because it adds dimension and excitement to the event FOR THEM.

Meeting, conference and exhibition planners' skill sets will change. Had Maddie Grant and Lindy Dreyer not known how to utilize Twitter and about the technology platforms for networking, broadcasting and capturing content, they could not have done what they did so quickly. This is a lesson to all planners to learn what's going on in the new world of event technology and for hell's sake, get on Twitter.

Being nimble pays dividends. The #Untech10 experience was a thrill ride for Maddie Grant. "I would totally do it again. I think doing things fast, collaboratively and openly takes away the stress of doing things perfectly. We just had to get it done. The reason we could do it with so many players was that we only had 24 hours to get it done. In the future organizations will need to be nimble enough to pull these types of things off," she says.

There is no such thing as control. If anything, #Untech10 demonstrated that control over the content, the message and the brand is elusive. If the meeting organization does not provide compelling content, establish the message (by listening and acting) and reinforce the brand (by example setting not advertising), the attendees will do it for them.

Live and virtual audiences are part of an event continuum. There was incredible electricity in the room of live bodies gathered at the Renaissance Hotel according to Grant. Likewise, the virtual attendees were lively, active and a major component of the meeting. When done correctly (i.e. allowing the audience to be as much a part of the meeting as the presenters), the live experience and the virtual experience can function in complementary ways.

The Takeaway: The revolution will not be televised. It will be streamed live and on demand to a computer or smartphone near you.

Michelle's last comment is the mandate for our future.

Social Media Toolbox

The following article is from Event Marketer's website. I found some new technologies in this article and I bet you will too.

Eight social media technologies you're probably not using… yet

Kenneth Briodagh | From the May 2010 Issue

Most event marketers are trying to find the best way to maximize the power of social media at their events. But that can be hard to do if Facebook and Twitter are the only tools in their bag of tricks. With new and more targeted platforms popping up daily, it can be just as challenging to keep up with which ones are relevant and useful for the event industry. EM narrowed the field to eight of the most interesting social media tools, sites and platforms fit for events.

Foursquare: foursquare.com

What it does: The darling of the last 60 days, Foursquare has steadily become an online Twitter-based sensation. The basic premise: Using Twitter, players in the Foursquare game "check in" via tweet to the locations in real life that they visit. By doing so, they win "badges" that equate to bragging rights. The most sought- after badges can inspire fierce competition and "swarming" (another badge that players win if enough people check in at one location). Brands that want to be part of the action invite attendees to check in at their event, if they already use the app. If not, they can invite them to download the app to any smartphone and then start checking in. Important note: Foursquare uses the Internet to find your location, so if you're in an obscure locale, you're outta luck.

Why use it: Consumers love a little healthy competition, and Foursquare can bring that competitive spirit to life at your event. If you want guests to come to your booth or fan zone, and return again and again, let people know that the "mayor" of your zone (the user who checks in the most) gets special perks, like a jump to the front of the line, discounts or cool giveaways. Be creative. If you give them the tools and the incentive, they may "check in" at your next event and inspire others to do the same.

AerWave by Aerva: aerva.com

What it does: Aerva's new widget allows brands to aggregate most major social media feeds into one easy to read display, which is then broadcast to a screen via a proprietary player for all event attendees to see and (hopefully) interact with via Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and other platforms. Use it for large audiences who need to see your display to follow a Twitter hashtag, or get updates from your branded Facebook page. Great for conferences and trade shows, or large consumer events.

Why use it: Though it is possible to build a multi-platform widget of your own and then connect a flat screen television to a laptop for display, there are a lot of moving parts in that kind of an operation, which makes for a greater chance of snafu. To avoid that possibility, AerWave's simpler methodology might be the answer, for about $1,000 in annual subscription costs.

SocialTalk by Syncapse: socialtalk.com

What it does: So your brand already has a presence in social media. You're on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Now, the time has come to get the detailed tracking you need to prove that your time is well spent and that the trusted staffers who are managing your social identity have the supervision they need. Enter SocialTalk. This content management system takes care of the whole cycle, from creation to measurement, across several major platforms. Once the post or tweet or video is created, it goes though a predetermined workflow path, which includes automated approval mechanisms and tracking for changes and edits. Finally, the data capture tool is truly powerful, with an integrated dashboard for all key metrics, tracking data for key commentators followers and fans.

Why use it: Because it matters how and why your online presence gets there and what happens to the investment in time and money you made to be there. It's just that simple. Thing to know: SocialTalk isn't free. Contact a Syncapse sales person for more info.

Chatter by Salesforce.com: salesforce.com/chatter

What it does: Chatter is a secure, private social media cloud à la Twitter, that will allow members of an organization to collaborate in real time on projects across distance. (Note: Chatter is still in beta and is scheduled for full release this year.) It incorporates document sharing, outside social networks like Facebook and Twitter, an app exchange for Chatter-specific mobile apps, feeds for projects and events that matter to the user and security protocols that keep only the people who should be in the know, in the loop.

Why use it: Well, the tricky part is that Chatter is a feature of Salesforce, a CRM platform, so if you don't use salesforce.com, and don't plan to, then Chatter isn't for you. However, if you do or are considering it, then Chatter's ability to keep your team all on the same page, on the back end, where key communications, files and instructions are communicated in real time, it might make the difference between a disaster and a disaster averted.

Ustream: ustream.tv

What it does: This live video feed website is pretty simple to use; set up an account, plug your camera into your computer (gotta be online, remember), name your show, then broadcast your live event like a live television show. Easy as that. The possibilities are endless: "XYZ Brand presents, live coverage of its national road tour. Tune in Fridays at 5:00."

Why use it: Though pre-recorded video as seen on Vimeo, YouTube and countless other sites have value, live, unedited viewing is much more trustworthy to consumer audiences than recordings. Also, it really helps absent attendees taste a bit of the energy of the event when they can see it as it happens. Finally, because it's live, the length of the clip isn't a problem, though bandwidth can be. Tip: Make sure your connection is fast enough to handle the feed. If your live event has a wide audience, some of whom might not make it but want to feel like they're there, and you want a professional, high quality look, with the comfortable familiarity of television, Ustream could be the way to go.

LinkedIn: linkedin.com

What it does: Forget the notion that LinkedIn is just about networking now in case you need to look for a job later. Most of the active users of LinkedIn are not there for the networking, but for research. They're looking into people they might do business with and businesses they might hire or recently heard about. Therefore, the opportunity exists to augment your next trade-show presence (live or virtual) with your company's LinkedIn profile. "Want to know more about us and about our company? Visit us at ..." Get it?

Why use it: It has been said that LinkedIn is out of date and growing irrelevant. Untrue, especially in the b-to-b world, thanks in large part to a suite of new features the site is in the process of rolling out. One of the more recent is the "Follow Company" button, which lets users and visitors link to a given company as easily as a "fan" on Facebook. Followers will get info on new hires and promotions, new jobs and company profile updates. Delish.

Gowalla: gowalla.com

What it does: Gowalla is a location-based social network. Consumers use it to direct friends and neighbors to the coolest places, like restaurants, hiking paths and other hotspots, in their cities. If you want to be one of those places, you just have to get the Gowalla cred to do it. Unlike Foursquare, you can register your event site, even if it doesn't have a true street address. Once you do, Gowalla's giant e-map will put a pin on your spot and start tracking who's coming. If you're really cool, you might be chosen as a Gowalla featured spot, but don't get too excited—that takes awhile. Gowalla is downloadable as an app to most smartphones and can be used online directly.

Why use it: Gowalla allows you to earn that off-beat street cred that keeps you from looking like Big Brother's holding company. It also enables your brand's existing fans and followers to share the virtues of your event with their network of friends and colleagues. The virtual recommendations may help drive attendance or bring together like-minded consumers interested in your brand.

eventSocial: threestage.com/eventsocial

What it does: Conferences and trade shows are the natural home of this event-based social networking tool, but with a little creativity it can be translated to a variety of events. Three Stage Media, which owns the eventSocial software, says it can embed the program into any event's microsite or homepage in about a week. To do so, the organizer has to upload the .csv file of the attendee list to eventSocial and the company does the rest. Once uploaded and set up, attendees can search their own networks for people they know who are attending the show, and invite non-attendees to come to the show, if they think they'd enjoy the subject matter.

Why use it: Everyone knows that the most important advocate for a brand or event is an attendee, so eventSocial has created a great way for attendees to collaborate on site and bring new attendees into the mix who might otherwise have not come at all. EM

CHAPTER NINE - THE COMPETITIVE EDGE – FOLLOWING-UP ON LEADS

The intent of this Chapter to place a big spotlight on solutions to this epidemic of poor lead follow-up on trade show leads. We will need to look at the overall lead management structure within companies to assess the smaller trade show lead generation function. Typically the trade show marketing activities only comprise around 11% of the total marketing budgets according to the CMO Council. They have produced an annual marketing report called: *CMO Council State of Marketing Outlook, Intentions and Investments for 2010.*

This report has been produced for the last four years. In this year's report, they state [the underling is added for easy viewing of the trade show statistic]:

> Management requirements for greater top-line growth in 2010 are reflected in how demand generation, sales support and advertising dollars are being directed.
>
> Largest shares are being allocated to database marketing (12.5 percent), sales collateral/literature (12 percent), <u>trade shows and conferences (11.5 percent)</u>, and online advertising (7 percent). In contrast to 2009, most marketers are seeing their media budgets stay the same or increase slightly by five percent. Larger gains of over five percent are reflected in interactive/web marketing, social media, search marketing, SEO, and mobile communications areas.

In this Chapter, information will be presented that discusses:

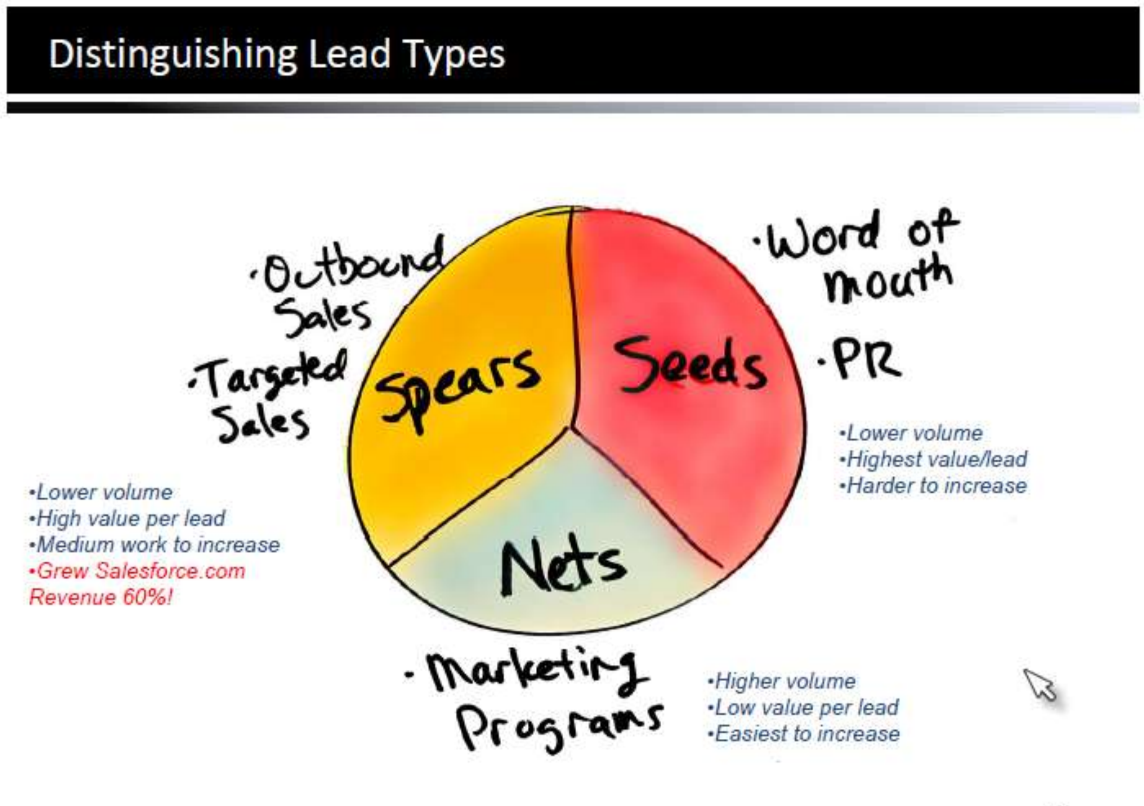
- Types of leads an how they are generated for a company
- Research on lead generation
- Core components of a "Universal Lead Definition" and what a "sales ready" lead is
- How to tighten up the lead follow
- What the attendee's attitudes are toward follow-up?

LEAD GENERATION TYPES

Each company has a distinct set of lead generation models. They are either the outbound or inbound or both. The percentage will vary depending on what has been effective for them in the past. In the last few years, inbound marketing via a digital presence has grown significantly.

The graphic Aaron Ross, author of a new book: *CEO Flow,* uses [below] is concise in the way it portrays the three general lead categories. In his consulting and writing, he uses the analogy of Spears, Nets and Seeds to describe the various lead categories for any firm. For our discussion of trade show leads, it is only a portion of the overall category marketing programs.

This graph helps to frame the discussion and view trade shows leads as a smaller piece of the overall lead generation.



TRADE SHOW LEADS - A SMALLER BUT POTENTIALLY POWERFUL SEGMENT

Even though the trade show function has a smaller piece of the pie than the other types, if there is an established lead follow-up plan, significant results can take place.

Rich Erschik of RichardErschik.com has a story about one of his clients. The company went to a food show several years ago and the investment they made in their exhibit was significant - $450,000. Because they used his follow-up process, within 30 days a lead from the show signed a $4.5 million dollar order! Now that is the type of story we would all like to have – no matter what size our budget was for a show.

Leads turning into sales – that is what it is all about.

Having the company focus on the lead process can ensure that leads are qualified, nurtured and become customers. If there is no established process many marketing dollars are wasted and you are handing the competition your business.

An expert in the overall lead management process is Mac McIntosh from Sales Lead Experts. He was asked in an interview the following question:

> **What is the most helpful advice you've received to improve your business?** Treat every lead like it was going to be your best customer until you determine otherwise.
>
> **Do the exhibit managers think this way?** Unfortunately, a vast group does not.

RELEVANT RESEARCH AND WHITE PAPERS ON LEAD MANAGEMENT

One organization which has tracked the inner works of sales lead management is an association called The Sales Lead Management Association. They have a robust website and produce white papers, annual research, articles, etc. It is free to become a member of this association where one can access their entire library of information. It is quite a treasure trove of useful information.

The Association is headed up by Jim Obermayer. Earlier this year he wrote a White Paper titled: "*Why the Space Shuttle Columbia, Toyota's Auto Recalls, and Inquiry Dormancy are Related.*" Intriguing title?

He captures the essence of the poor lead follow-up epidemic I referred to earlier when he states:

> "Normalized deviation," Obermayer contends, "is the culprit which has plagued lead generation marketing programs for 50 years. Salespeople ignore many of the inquiries and leads they receive, and over time marketing and sales management accept a 75%-90% lack of follow-up as 'normal.' With today's sophisticated marketing automation and lead management processes, the spotlight is exposing the severity of this issue."
>
> Obermayer asks, "How can the waste of billions of marketing dollars each year be accepted as normal?" The solution, he contends, is to place a spotlight on the issue, establish a 100% follow-up policy for company salespeople, and institute a marketing automation program which contributes to the 100% follow-up rule.

You can obtain this The White Paper can be downloaded here.

In another publication from the Sales Lead Management Association, they conduct an annual review of the sales lead process. The Velos Group conducted the research and produced the report: *2009 Lead Management Practices Survey Results.* The full report can be found at this link.

One of their questions asked: Does your company qualify lead for sales. See the survey response below in the graph.

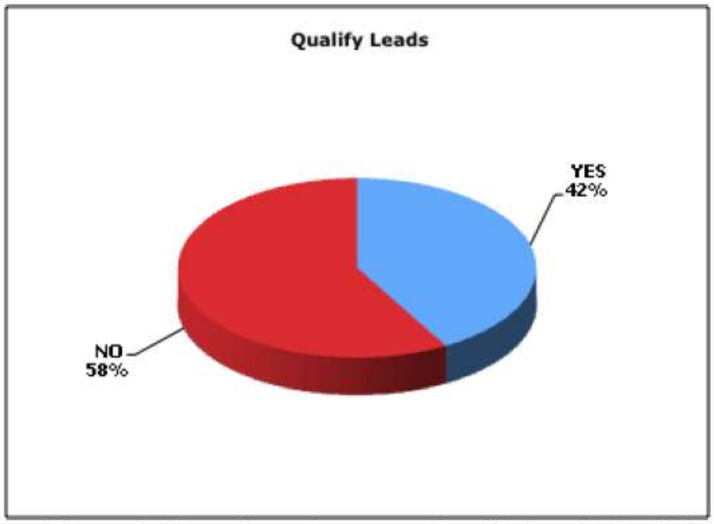


Figure 3: Does Your Company Qualify Leads for Sales

This figure is shocking – 58% of the total leads, including trade show leads are not qualified. No wonder the sales forces revolts when leads from a trade show are thrown over the cubicle wall.

As Mac McIntosh likes to tell his apple orchard analogy, the sales people only want to pick the ripe apples from the orchard. It is marketing responsibility to plant the seeds, then water, weed and feed the trees so there can be an abundant harvest.

Provided are some other research findings from the Sales Lead Management Association annual report: *2009 Lead Management Practices Survey Results.*

- 64.9% of the respondents could not track ROI for their Marketing programs.
- 85% of the respondents were not very happy with their current Sales Force.

- 58% of the companies do not qualify their marketing inquiries before they are sent to sales.
- 44.7% of the companies have no formal process to forecast sales and 24% are still using Excel.

Core Components of a Universal Lead Definition

The challenge for a company is to have a lead definition that is accepted throughout the organization. It is critically important that sales and marketing are on the same page regarding the factors that make up a qualified lead and what is a "sales ready" lead.

An authority in the lead management field is Brian Carroll. His company is InTouch. Recently he has been quoted in saying:

> "I'm amazed that 90% of the companies I've talked with over the last six months lack a clear definition of a sales lead really is – that is their sales and marketing departments don't agree on a universal lead definition."

Does your company have one? One of the components of the universal lead definition is something called BANT. Here is what it means:

- Budget – what is the size?
- Authority – what level do they have?
- Need – how urgent is the need?
- Timeframe – what is their readiness to buy?

The other significant aspect of the universal lead definition is scoring:

- A - The prospect is ready to see a sales rep
- B - The prospect still needs nurturing, but the contact is to be done by the sales team
- C - The inquiry still needs nurturing, to be done by marketing
- D - An inquiry that is not worth nurturing. Put the inquiry into the marketing database for ongoing communications or throw it away.

Other Important Information for a Trade Show Lead:

- Contact information
- Needs assessment or qualification assessment
- Follow-up plan
- Notes on the discussion with the rep
- Name of the rep
- Show name, location, date

NOW WHAT IS A "SALES READY" TRADE SHOW LEAD?

It is vital to have the sales department's fingerprints all over the universal lead definition. Here is an outline of how to get started with the sales team.

- Set up a meeting with sales management.
- Ask them: What is the definition of a "sales ready" trade show lead?
- Create questions that you can record in the booth to qualify attendees.
- Go back to sales and get their buy in to the definition.
- Tell sales that they will only be receiving qualified leads from the trade shows. And because of their buy in they will actually believe this and act on those leads.

I would recommend that there be a series of meetings with your sales team to have them "buy into" the definition of what sales ready really means. Then someone in a senior management position needs to monitor the process.

TEN TIPS FOR TIGHTENING UP TRADE SHOW LEAD MANAGEMENT

This article from tech-EM, the online resource for technology event managers, is an important one. It helps outline the process you can use to enhance the lead process for your company.

> There must be black holes in the floors of most trade shows—because that's where a lot of your leads seem to end up. We're not kidding.
>
> Consider the fact that "non-fulfillment" by exhibitors is one of the top complaints by trade show attendees who actually ask for more information. Marketers under the gun to show a return for their investments are now recognizing that every lead that falls through the cracks is lost revenue. As a result, lead-generation systems are being upgraded in a big way.

Xerox, for example, has focused more than a little energy on enhancing its lead-gen system to ensure every hand-raiser is tracked, followed up on, and accounted for. “Since implementing the new system, we’ve gathered more and better data,” says Xerox trade show manager Joshua Stevens. So how do you close the loop? A consistent, systemized approach is required. Ten tips for A+ lead systems:

Think Sales. Stop focusing on the collection of leads and refocus on distribution and follow-up. Create a system that functions beyond the show floor collection process to work within the parameters of your company’s established sales process. Although most companies’ trade shows fall under marketing, succeeding in terms of leads requires event managers to put on their sales hats. “At trade shows, I’m a sales manager,” says Stevens.

Standardize. The content and format of the data you collect should be consistent from show to show and integrated easily into your CRM or lead-tracking system. This expedites the follow-up process and enables you to perform program-wide analysis and measurement. Tip: Work with the lead-retrieval supplier at each show to customize their system for yours—have their data entry pre-laid out the way you need it entered into your own funnel.

Systematize the Process. Where will the data go after the show and who will be responsible for it? Having all the details defined—from data collection through fulfillment to follow-up and tracking—ensures the ball won’t get dropped somewhere down the line. At FedEx, as an example, leads are forwarded from trade shows to inside sales reps for requalification. From there, they are entered into the corporate lead-tracking database and assigned to specific operating companies and reps. “Everyone knows what the next step is throughout the process,” says Camille Ellison, FedEx’s marketing program manager.

Get Other Stakeholders Involved. Collecting and funneling leads from trade shows needs to be a process shared by multiple departments. “Get out of your box and reach other parts of your organization,” says Stevens. At Xerox, event marketers work closely with the inside sales department to develop and refine the lead-management system on an ongoing basis. “It’s been an evolution, and it’s going to keep evolving,” he adds.

Deliver Quality, Not Quantity. If you want sales reps or channel partners to take the leads seriously, don’t waste their time by passing along tire kickers. Garbage in equals garbage out. Pass along the cream of the crop only. BASF, for instance, qualifies its visitors before scanning the data into the system. “We collect qualified leads, not contacts,” says Janet

Johnson, the company's sales and trade promotions manager. There's a difference.

Ask the Right Questions. These include demographics, product interest, buying time frame, and anything else that helps facilitate the sales process. "We ask questions that help us assign each lead to the right department for follow-up," says Joe Spaccarelli, senior director of corporate events at Symbol Technologies. Based on the answers to these questions, Symbol marks the lead for further contact or assigns it to inside sales, outside sales or a channel partner. (Channel partner assignments are made based on a match with the partner's skill set or geographic location.)

Respond Quickly. Strike while the iron is hot by responding to the leads immediately. "If they ask us to call, we call. If they ask for information, we send it," says Spaccarelli. BASF expedites response by using its lead system to generate emails to prospects. Each message includes links to the specific information that the individual requested.

Monitor Activity. Xerox posts leads to a Web site and gives resellers a set period of time to respond. If they don't make progress within a certain time frame, the lead is given to someone else. Symbol requires that channel partners receiving leads report back on a monthly and quarterly basis to monitor progress and the closure rate. "We want to make sure we aren't overwhelming them," says Spaccarelli. The outcome: Those who follow-up and close deals get more leads; the others don't.

Accountability. Ensure the sales team follows up by placing the follow-up under the watch of sales management. Symbol uses an online Web portal to distribute and monitor its leads. The portal is watched and managed by inside sales to make sure deals are progressing. Other members of the sales team—territory managers, channel account managers, and the like—keep an eye on progress as well. "Everyone has real-time visibility," says Spaccarelli.

Analyze and Report. Once you have the data, use it to calculate ROI for your trade shows and to assess which shows are the most successful. "We look across the portfolio and see which are working for us. It's a decision support tool," says Spaccarelli.

Or use your database to identify new opportunities. "By consolidating our data we are able to dig deeper into the leads," says Ellison. "We identify what additional services we can sell them and opportunities for other FedEx operating companies."

How to Follow-up

The previous material has shown us the challenges of lead follow-up, now let's focus on the actual solution - following up on trade show leads.

One of my webinars in early 2010 was for exhibitors of PRSM (Professional Retail Store Maintenance Association) in preparation for their upcoming Orlando show April 18 - 20. Post show lead follow-up was a discussion point in the presentation. After the webinar, I talked with one of the participants, Bob Micunek Director of Marketing & Sales for Springwise Facility Management. He shared with me the structured process they use for trade show lead follow-up. Now it needs to be noted that his firm is not a large corporation. If they handled thousands of leads he might consider another process which would be cost and time effective.

Provided is his great material:

> We just returned from the SPECS (Store Planning Equipment and Construction Seminars) annual event in Orlando, FL at the Gaylord Palms Resort. In addition to some of the things that you recommended like getting the salespeople involved on the front end with invitations to visit your booth, here are a few other things we do to increase our chances of developing a revenue stream from each and every contact at a trade show:
>
> - Stay the day after the trade show ends and do a complete debrief of every person that we met face-to-face whether it was in the booth, at breakfast, lunch, dinner or cocktail parties. We assign a lead salesperson to follow-up with each person. We do have geographic sales regions but for this exercise we make it the responsibility of the person that had direct contact with the prospect in the booth or had the best connection with the prospect.
> - Send written thank you cards to every person we meet face-to-face 48 hours after the show closes.
> - Send a thank you email to every person we meet face-to-face within in one week of the show closing in addition to the written thank you note. The more specific you can be in the note, the better it is received since it increases your credibility with the prospect. Generic mass emails don't work nearly as well . . . it's the personal touch that gets the responses.
> - On a side note, I always try to mention a positive experience that I had at their store/restaurant/company. It tells the prospect that you are also a consumer of their goods or service.
> - Send "Sorry we missed you at SPECS" to the people in attendance at the trade show but didn't meet face-to-face. It's amazing how

many of these messages are forwarded to the appropriate people in the organization if the prospect in attendance was not the decision-maker for our services. A tool that we use is Jigsaw to compile email addresses of attendees since most trade shows won't send this information on the master attendee list. This is a lot of extra effort but well worth the time.

- Track communication with each and every attendee at the show. This takes a lot of extra effort but is the only way to measure true ROI of each trade show. Senior Sales Management needs to mandate this otherwise the follow-up won't happen.

Bob's last comment about have Senior Management involved is critical for this process to work.

Springwise Facility Maintenance is doing it is the correctly. They are on the path to ensure 100% lead follow-up. Every exhibitor should discuss a plan like this within their company. Or if there are too many leads from their show participation they should consider an outside service to augment the follow-up efforts.

TACTICS FOR FOLLOW-UP

The following is a list of potential tactics you should review and determine what might be best for your efforts.

- Personal email thank-you note from the staffer who met with the contact at the show.
- Personalized letter with the information requested at the show
- Invitation to subscribe to the corporate e-newsletter
- Personal thank you letter from a senior executive on letterhead stationery
- Reprint of your press coverage or another article
- Reminder of the final expiration date for the trade show special offer
- Promote to the attendees who did not make it to your booth, using the list from the show management
- Put an update to your website thanking visitors who came to your booth
- Add a contact form to your website visitors who did not attend the trade show

Remember to reach out to those who were unable to attend. They are just as important as the ones who showed up!

Do Attendees Notice the Lack of Follow-up?

Expectations are established on the show floor between a booth person and an attendee. So often an attendee walk away assuming the company will follow-up on the requested material or meeting. Often they go from expectation to disappointment because of poor or no follow-up.

Allison shared with the following perspective as an attendee and her thoughts regarding the follow-up process.

> As a trade shows attendee I have a rather different viewpoint. When I talk to the exhibitors I only ask for cards if I think a follow-up is worthwhile. As a consultant I frequently take information as I never know what a future client is going to require. I put a small note on the card so that my follow-up e-mail is personalized and try to send an e-mail to all new contacts even if it is only "I've thought about it and looked at your web site and don't think we can do something but would like to keep your details for future possibilities - by the way I like x on your website" If that e-mail generates a response then it is the start of a relationship and I am more likely to think of them in the future.
>
> However, those exhibitors that I do give my card to can generally be broken down into (in % order):
>
> - Never hear from them again - probably about 80%
> - Get a standard e-mail saying thanks for attending please see our web site. This is fine but I also get this from some people that I have talked specifically to and asked for a response on an issue
> - Get a phone call within the next week - don't mind these as it shows they are trying
> - Get a phone call or e-mail some months later. The record goes to a follow-up call 8 months later - what is the point of that?? I am more likely to feel insulted that you have finally got around to me (was business slow that week) than pleased to hear from you
> - Get a personalized e-mail or call that means I can start a relationship - probably about 0.1%
>
> In my book if you attend or exhibit at a trade show then you should be prepared to follow-up. If not then you are wasting everyone's time and money. It is the same problem that we see time and time again where a

new product is launched and the staff can't cope with demand. Be prepared and you will be surprised how much goodwill (and future sales) you will generate.

Last year my firm conducted online focus groups for Bartizan as a market validation study for their iLeads app. One of the segments was attendees of trade shows. The responses below show that the attendees are serious about the products and services they saw on the floor and the need for some type of follow-up.

- I share ideas and any potential techniques that might be of interest to others in my group. If it was a show or demonstration of a product that we were already seriously considering, then we are expected to give input on the product. Would it be beneficial to our work? Is it cost-effective? Do we need/want it? How would we each use and benefit from this product?
- When I return it is expected that I have share information about the products we utilize and what is coming from this product in the near future. It is also expected that I share any new information of products that may interest one of our departments so that they can follow-up and see for themselves. It is also expected that I share what I have learned with my Administrators if I think there is something that may be beneficial to our instructional technology. [Laughing] I am also expected to come back and spread out any 'freebees' collected for everyone to grab.

Trade show attendee want follow-up and follow through. As indicates in Chapter One on Industry Research, 80% are qualified buyers. They will be making a buying decision. Will it be your company or your competitors?

A CONVERSATION WITH CHRIS TREMBLAY OF EVENT-TECHNOLOGIES

In the previous section, we discussed the low incident rates for lead follow-up. Now let's turn to an expert on the lead follow up process, Chris Tremblay of Event Technologies. He has been in this world for years and specializes in implementing trade show lead follow-up practices for companies that don't have the resources or know-how to do it themselves.

Chris shares his thoughts on the lead follow-up challenge:

> Every exhibitor wants to take full advantage of their trade show investment. For most companies the best way to do this is by selling to the prospects that stop by their booth. Unfortunately, it sounds a lot easier than it is. One main problem most companies run into is resources. Few companies have the staff necessary to dedicate to this process. Between defining a "sales ready" lead before the show, constructing an onsite survey, choosing the correct lead retrieval equipment, scoring the leads, emailing, distributing and calling the leads, something usually falls through the cracks and the whole process is compromised. That's where Event Technologies steps in. We help companies define a process that will put their sales people in the best position to close deals. Then we make sure that process is carried out every step of the way.
>
> Trade shows are excellent venues to meet qualified prospects face to face. However, the leads generated at these events are more difficult to handle than any of those generated by web based, email or direct mail campaigns due to the numerous data issues, chaotic trade show environment, and the fact that you almost never use the same system to collect the leads.
>
> In addition, to get the most out of your trade show investment you must get to the "hot" prospects before your competitors, who all emerge from the event with the same list of leads. Being first requires an exhibitor to collect consistent qualification data to use with a prioritization methodology or rating system that points their follow-up efforts to the high priority leads. Without a prioritization approach every lead looks the same.
>
> The most complete trade show follow-up includes an email, personal call, and direct mail. Contacting your leads with more than one method can increase the effectiveness of your trade show follow up.

Now he reaches the stumbling block for so many companies. The "universal lead qualification" standard which was discussed in [section xyz] now comes into play. Each company has a unique set of requirements for their leads and therefore a custom view of what the lead categories should be. Chris continues to explain:

The two fundamental challenges, **lack of lead qualification and data complexity** must be overcome before effective trade show lead follow up can be realized.

To begin the process, we work with the exhibitor to define what a sales ready lead is for their company. This is the foundation that allows us to develop a set of "rating rules" that will determine each leads priority. From these rules we build qualification questions whose answers generate a set of "custom qualifiers" that will be programmed into the show scanners or used by the PC-based systems or Smart Phones to collect booth data.

After the show the lead data is immediately converted from the show format into one usable by our RapidResponse™ system, the technology platform used to deliver our service which enables us to offer great value to our clients. Data clean-up is required for almost all lead data which, includes but is not limited to:

- Removing test scans, booth reps, and competitors
- Removing duplicate scans (if each one has qualifiers, who gets deleted?)
- Adding missing country codes
- Adding missing zip codes
- Correcting offset scan data

I have been in this business for almost fifteen (15) years and I have never seen a lead data file that was without errors. We have seen shows where the first and last names were switched for half of the leads, and many shows where phone numbers and zip codes are mixed up. Trade show lead data is often incomplete with missing email addresses, phone numbers and wrong address info (home vs. office), but the bigger issue in terms of database management is file formatting and mistakes made by show management. If you don't clean up the data before you put it into your database, it will cause you plenty of headaches in the future.

Chris and his Event Technologies team offer their clients packaged solutions, customized for each event that can include one or more of the following services chosen in advance by the client:

Scoring and rating - the lead qualification data is analyzed against the client's lead rating rules and the leads are categorized into one of 3 or 4 categories such as "A", "B" and "C".

Benefits

- Prioritization enables an exhibitor to focus on the high priority leads instead of sending all the leads to sales for action.
- Knowing which leads to approach first significantly increases the odds of converting a good prospect into a great customer.
- Automated scoring eliminates time delays and manual effort especially when rating hundreds of leads utilizing 3 or 4 criteria.
- Lead rating greatly reduces the number of unqualified badge scans getting into the exhibitor’s CRM database.

Attendee emails - an email is sent to each of the leads with content determined by the lead rating and graphics of the exhibitor’s choosing. A common scenario would be; unique URLs will point "A" leads to landing pages where they can further qualify themselves, request a sales call and gain additional information. "B" leads will be pointed to marketing pages and "C" leads will receive a simple "thank you".

Benefits

- “A” and “B” leads get an immediate response that builds on the contact made in the booth.
- URLs point the attendee to the appropriate web page as determined by the lead’s rating.
- Demonstrates to the attendee how incredibly responsive the exhibitor is.

The typical email is opened by about 20-30% of the recipients, which tells us that this follow-up is a very important part of the post show process. Including pictures and links to show specific web pages is going to improve the effectiveness of this communication. Other ideas that we’ve had success with in the past include creating an email that mimics your in-booth marketing, or your company’s website with content that is specific to the show. In addition, we recommend that you avoid sending an email without links, or links to your company’s home page because the idea is to continue with the excitement that was generated by the show.

Take Control of your Trade Show Follow-up

Prioritize your leads

Save time by focusing your follow-up efforts on the legitimate prospects.

Get there first

Contact the hot prospects first. Send emails, post cards, and place the initial follow-up call before your competitors.

Create sales opportunities

Deliver only sales ready leads to your reps and fulfill your current customer's requests to keep them happy.

Report on your success

Make educated decisions based on reports that detail booth traffic, lead quality and other key info.

Event Technologies will expedite your follow-up and help increase your trade show ROI.

www.event-techs.com 310-581-2696

Next Chris recommends that a company call the leads. This is an important step in the process. That phone contact can clarify current information and uncover new information in determining if the lead is truly sales ready.

Validation calls - to insure sales people only receive "sales ready" leads, many firms put the most qualified leads through a validation process to contact the attendees directly to confirm the data gathered in the booth and schedule a sales call. Event Technologies will call each "A" and "B" rated lead and leave informative voice mails, make appointments when possible, and get additional information where available. The objective is to insure the qualification effort is not pushed to the sales force whose mission is to convert prospects to customers, not to cold call into a list of trade show attendees.

Benefits

- Contacting high priority leads by phone further demonstrates responsiveness.
- Personal contact enables validation of qualification data and potentially gathering of additional information to accelerate the sales effort.
- Sales rep calls can be scheduled during the contact.

Validating the leads gives the sales reps a degree of confidence they will not get from an Excel spread sheet of contacts from the show. When the prospect makes an appointment to talk to a sales rep, you know they are relatively serious about your product offering.

Follow-up postcards - to help overcome email and voice mail screening we can also send a post card using standard mail as an additional means of reaching the high priority leads to schedule a call and show them your commitment to go the extra mile to earn their business.

Benefits

- Personalized direct mail stands out from the rest of the competition.
- Postcards help avoid the email and voice mail screening.

Sales ready leads are the goal for lead follow up. As we have heard from Mac McIntosh earlier in this document, the sales people will only pick the ripe apples from the trees. Chris concludes by saying:

Event Technologies' services simplify trade show follow up and help increase trade show ROI. No longer will sales waste time chasing unqualified leads while the competition gets to the "A" leads first and the sales database gets cluttered with unfiltered badge scans. Our RapidResponse system takes the mystery out of converting the wide variety of show file formats into something usable by CRM systems and lets companies focus on converting their "sales ready" prospects into satisfied customers.

About the author:

Chris Tremblay is a recognized leader in trade show marketing, lead retrieval and follow-up, whose Event Technologies firm works with large and small organizations who want to increase the results of their exhibiting experience and ROI.

Prior to founding Event Technologies in Long Beach, CA in 2001 he spent several years as a leading sales representative during the early years of NewLeads Inc., where he learned the lead retrieval business first hand. He was a visionary in the development of the RapidResponse technology that automates the lead follow-up process used by Event Technologies and is a trusted advisor to his many customers.

His blog on a wide range of topics can be found at http://www.event-techs.com and he can be reached at chris@event-techs.com and 310-581-2696.

Chapter Ten - What Every Exhibitor Should Know about Virtual Events: 7 Strategies to Guide You Effortlessly Through the Virtual Terrain

By Susan Friedmann, CSP, The Tradeshow Coach

Thriving in today's economy means collaborating with colleagues, partners, and customers around the globe, sometimes at a moment's notice. At the same time you want to conduct your business in a way that strengthens the quality of your relationships. Virtual events are a burgeoning new way that businesses are able to use the Internet as a relationship-building and maintenance tool.

Virtual events are gaining in popularity. This means that as savvy exhibitors you can't ignore them, hoping and praying that if you don't acknowledge them, they'll go away. I'm here to tell you, it's just not going to happen!

While this certainly does not signal the demise or replacement of the live events you currently participate in, it means that many companies are experimenting with virtual counterparts to supplement or augment face-to-face meetings and conferences, as well as provide ongoing content, follow-up opportunities, and a deeper reach into sections of the market that they currently serve.

According to the "2010 Virtual Market Outlook Report" (VMOR)" released by the Event Marketing Institute, "The market is still figuring out the full potential of virtual and how best to harness its power. In the face of economic uncertainty, and driven by the need to constantly refresh how brands and audiences connect with one another, virtual is a bigger part of the conversation than ever before." *Wired* magazine predicts 2010 will see a 500% increase in virtual events. GigaOm.com, a highly regarded technology website, predicts that high-end virtual technology and virtual worlds will grow from approximately $50 million in 2009 to $8-$10 billion by 2014.

In other words, the meeting industry landscape is changing dramatically, and exhibitors and show organizers need to adapt to this ever-changing world.

It might look as though, like magic, virtual events seem to have appeared out of nowhere. Actually, they have been around for over ten years. The primitive versions used very basic technology that needed considerable bandwidth for anyone to participate adequately. Ten years ago, bandwidth was considerably slower and more expensive than today. Virtual event technology has come a long way over the past several years, evolving from basic to increasingly sophisticated and refined environments, to streamlined 3D cyber-venues. The technology has advanced to where virtual events have a look and feel that almost mimic's their physical counterparts.

The technology is now very affordable, and continues to advance by leaps and bounds. This means that staying current and learning how to use this powerful new marketing tool poses a challenge to organizations.

THE CHALLENGE

How to use the virtual event technology effectively, and with confidence, poses a challenge to many organizations today. It requires a new set of skills to learn so that you can easily and effortlessly participate in online events.

For many exhibitors, as with most people, a lack of knowledge of the unknown often leads to intimidation, fear and anxiety. Because new technology frequently takes time to grasp, whether for business or every day use, it's easy to exercise the "busyness" excuse to shy away or avoid it until absolutely necessary.

Virtual events fall into this category. Plus, they add another level of resistance for exhibitors who view them as impersonal and complicated. Some feel that not being in the same room with the audience means that it's difficult or even impossible to make a real impact and connection.

Alternatively, once you know and understand how a new tool can boost your business and take it to a whole new level, chances are you'll embrace, and use it, especially when it speaks to your bottom line. Virtual events give you the opportunity to reach people and places you never thought possible.

To help you better understand the virtual event environment, the following seven strategies will guide you effortlessly through the virtual world. They are pointers to help you grasp how this powerful, exciting tool can give your business a boost, especially when business may have slowed down more than you'd like.

STRATEGY # 1: UNDERSTAND THE BASICS

A virtual event is "a gathering of many people who become connected through a common online environment."

Virtual events can be divided into three distinct camps:

1. The Virtual Event Camp includes trade shows, online job or career fairs, conferences, or other similar events that attract large numbers of attendees. Providers in this environment include InXpo, Unisfair, ON24, and others. Currently, these are events that 2D, and are easy to attend using an Internet browser. They are scalable to extremely large numbers of attendees, 10,000 or more, which make them ideal for trade shows and events.

(Resource: InXpo - Using social media at a virtual trade show)

The Virtual World Camp includes computer-hosted, 3D simulated and immersive environments such as Second Life, Teleplace, 3DXplorer, ProtoSphere, and others. These environments offer 360 degree walk around views of the space, however, the barrier to entry is not scalable to large numbers of attendees and simultaneous users. These are best used for small meetings, conferences and training.

The Web Meeting Camp includes web or online meetings used primarily for planning, preparation, training, coaching or desktop information sharing. Providers include [Fuze Meeting](), [Telenect](), [GotoWebinar](), [Telepresence](), and many others.

(Source: 2010 Virtual Meeting Outlook Report)

In addition to the above broad parameters, you are likely to come across some of the following terms:

A hybrid event refers to a physical and virtual component that organizers hold simultaneously or in some combination. This provides a significant solution for remote employees or attendees not able to attend these events.

Simulcasting, short for simultaneous broadcasting refers to a program or event broadcast at the same time over one or more media. For example, The Metropolitan

Opera House in New York recently introduced simulcasting of a selection of their live events to be viewed in remote locations domestically and internationally.

A webcast is an Internet broadcast. The technology used provides streaming video of lectures in universities, speeches at conferences, and a wide variety of other events.

A webinar is a web-based seminar, commonly known as an online workshop. Many companies offer webinars as an alternative to traditional learning environments.

STRATEGY # 2: GRASP OPPORTUNITIES

What opportunities do virtual events offer organizations?

As organizations look to adopt the virtual environment into their meeting and event strategy, they have three options - to *supplement*, *complement*, or *replace* their physical counterparts.

According to VOMR's research study of 889 marketers, "the most popular use of virtual technology is for presentations (61%), internal meetings (56%), training and education (53%) - typically delivered via webcasts and webinars, followed by more robust solutions, conferences (48%), and trade shows (32%)."

Microsoft, Amazon, Cisco, Accenture, and other major corporations, hold career fairs with keynote and breakout sessions in 3D spaces. Manpower Staffing has an entire campus in Second Life dedicated to recruiting talent and providing career search programs.

Recently a trade show organizer wanted to assemble an exhibitor training program just prior to the start of their show. Exhibitors have myriad things to take care of before a show; attending a live training program interferes with more important activities. However, the organizer agreed to meet virtually several weeks beforehand, allowing exhibitors to learn essentials to use before, during, and after the show, a far better use of their time and resources.

Whether show organizers supplement, complement, or replace their in-person events with virtual counterparts, these extra events offer you, the exhibitor, multiple opportunities to sell your products or services. Plus, virtual events provide longevity. Once over, the meeting can live on the organizer's website for extended periods, giving your offerings a greater lifespan and reach.

HIMSS (Healthcare Information & Management Systems Society) organizes virtual conferences in addition to their major MedTech in-person trade show. The live show draws nearly 30,000 people. However, HIMSS discovered that their virtual events didn't compete with their physical equivalent. In a survey conducted after the event, between 70% and 80% of the virtual attendees that responded said that they never attended the physical event even before HIMSS offered the virtual option.

STRATEGY # 3: ADAPT YOUR MARKETING STRATEGY

As you gain knowledge and a better understanding of virtual events, you'll soon realize the opportunities to use them for adding a deeper dimension to your current marketing strategy, incorporating sustainability and globalization. For example, when you leave a face-to-face event, attendees can easily forget you; your virtual events provide an ongoing destination for prospects and people who were unable to attend the live event. Your presentations and collateral material can be archived and made accessible as needed.

Using virtual technology lowers the cost of travel, accommodation and time out of the office. According to a recent corporate travel spending survey by the Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE), 33% of the 131 companies surveyed indicated they would be spending less on travel next year.

ON24, one of the leaders in webcasting and virtual event solutions, recently conducted a survey of 5,000 marketing professionals. The survey findings include the following:

- 74% said their companies are interested in virtual events to save money
- 50% said their companies are interested in virtual events to save time
- 82% said the green benefits of virtual events are important to their companies

According to Megan Heuer, research director with Sirius Decisions, "B-to-b marketers have been hit with a one-two punch in the last 12 months: the need to cut program costs at the same time [that] prospects cut [their] travel budgets. That combination led marketers to reduce spending on traditional events, while online events, from webcasts to virtual tradeshows, gained budget dollars."

In a recent interview, Brent Arslaner, Unisfair's Vice President, Channel Relationships, commented, "Virtual events can help fill the hole left by diminishing business travel by offering an economically and environmentally sound way to bring thousands of attendees to an event. They also deliver some of the richest marketing data available, because the anonymity of prospects evaporates. Plus, virtual events entice more C-level executives to attend because they have the luxury of popping in for just a couple of hours."

STRATEGY # 4: GET STARTED

Due to the tight economy, companies are turning to the virtual environment to save money with their meetings and events. This means that there's no time like the present to put your big toe in the water and get started adding virtual events to your marketing strategy.

With a plethora of webinars and virtual offerings currently available on the Internet, chances are you've already attended at least one, so this environment shouldn't be completely foreign to you. However, if you haven't, the following is a three-step process to get you started on the right track.

The 3-Step Process:

Attending an event is the first step in the "getting started" process. Find events where you can participate and observe. Log in to learn, whether on a webinar, attending a networking event, or signing in for a class in a 3D virtual world, like Teleplace or 3DXplorer.The second step is to participate in a virtual event. Be an exhibitor at a virtual trade show that attracts your target market. Consult with the organizers, or a virtual tradeshow coach, so that you maximize your participation. InXpo, Unisfair, and ON24 all have staff willing to help take the fear out of the technology so that you have a positive experience on the virtual trade show floor.

The third and final step is to organize your own program. Start with a simple webinar using services such as, Fuze Meeting, Telenect or GotoWebinar. The key to any successful event is the value of your content and the promotion to your target audience. As with everything you do, practice makes perfect.

Once you feel confident presenting in the virtual world, continually look for opportunities to use it to create community with your customers and prospects.

STRATEGY # 5: PARTICIPATE IN A VIRTUAL TRADE SHOW

The key to any virtual event success lies in the time, energy, and attitude you put into your strategic planning and execution. Just because the event takes place online, and outwardly appears simple, don't be deceived. A virtual event is still an event! You should approach your participation with the same enthusiasm, thoughtfulness, and commitment to succeed, as you would with any physical event.

Before signing up to participate in a virtual trade show, experience one in advance so that you have some idea of what to expect. The following 10 guidelines will help you navigate in the right direction:

1. Just like any physical event, know what you want to achieve. Start with the end in mind and reverse-engineer what you'll do and how you'll do it. Then create an event strategy with clear measurable goals.

2. Work with the show organizer to discuss booth options. Many of the same methods of luring visitors into your booth apply in the virtual environment, so whenever possible incorporate video or some type of visual presentation to attract attention.

3. Create one key message that you want to convey to your target audience.

4. Based on your available budget, check out the sponsorship opportunities to capture added company exposure.

5. Prepare the collateral material that will be available for prospects to access and download, such as white papers, brochures, presentations and special reports.

6. Promote your participation to your database. Don't leave the pre-show promotion solely to the show organizer. Take the lead and let your customers and prospects know that you'll be at the show.

7. Drive traffic to your booth with an incentive such as a special report, a Starbucks card, or some type of show special.

8. Promote your show participation after the event to encourage prospects who were unable to attend the show to access your material.

9. Qualify and prioritize leads collected and have a follow-up system in place before the show so that you make contact with prospects immediately after the event.

10. Evaluate your show ROI. You should be able to see exactly who accessed your content, how long they visited, and the questions and discussions that occurred in the chat sessions. Based on this information, you'll determine how best to follow-up and how to track results.

Strategy # 6: Prepare Your People

Although avatars in the virtual world represent your booth as attendants, they still speak on behalf of your organization and are your chosen ambassadors. Just as in a live show, your virtual staff can't just show up and expect to know what to do, how to do it and what's expected of them. They need preparation. Participation at a virtual show may seem simple, but winging it will get you "wing it" results. Your team needs to know how to pro-actively interact with visitors. Since most conversations at virtual shows are still done via conversation, they need to be prepared. They need to know what questions to ask of prospects so that they can maximize time with them. They should have prepared answers to anticipated questions.

During your preparation ensure that you share your goals and objectives for being at the show. Encourage your staff to create their own goals so that they are motivated to perform pro-actively. Make sure that "Can I help you?" is a forbidden question!

Check that each of your virtual staff members feels comfortable with the technology and how to use it. Stage several practice runs, and then verify that they know what to do; make them aware of what you expect of them.

Organize a debrief session after the show and capture what worked and what didn't so that the next time around everyone can improve their performance.

Strategy # 7: Understand the Consequences

Naturally, deciding not to be a part of the virtual world is always an option you can choose. However, before making any rash and final decisions on the subject, it's important to know and understand the consequences.

The biggest consequence is possible extinction as you lose your market share to savvy new, perhaps younger, competitors hungry and eager for action. The rising Gen Xers in the marketplace, either in organizations or in their own businesses, embrace the technology that many Baby Boomers find scary and want to avoid.

Those under the age of 35 are native to this technology and gravitate toward it naturally. It doesn't mean that they like it, but they have grown up in the age of video games and online communities. Those over the age of 35 are migrating into this digital landscape a few at a time; some embracing it with a sense of adventure, some coming along griping, kicking and screaming, and of course, there are those who refuse to change despite the consequences.

In conclusion, the more you get in tune with virtual events and what they can do for you, and more importantly for your business, the better off you'll be. The technology is definitely here to stay. It's constantly changing, improving, and being made available to greater numbers of people, whether you like it or not. The question is: will you embrace it or will you ignore it?

Take time to get to know and understand what being part of the virtual world can do for your organization. Start small, but definitely give it a try. Choose one new virtual delivery platform or tool and experiment for a month. Dive in, learn as much as you can, and then play and have fun. The more you know, the less it'll intimidate and scare you. In fact, quite the opposite; you might even develop a liking for the technology you once avoided. According to author, Susan Jeffers, "Feel the fear and do it anyway." Hopefully you'll discover a whole new world of opportunities that can take your business to a new and greater level of profitability. The sky's the limit in the virtual world, so enjoy the journey!"

Wishing you much virtual success!

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About the Author:

Susan Friedmann, CSP, recognized international trade show marketing expert, works with organizations who want to increase results and focus on building better relationships with customers, prospects and advocates in the marketplace.

She is an exciting, dynamic speaker who delivers top-notch live and virtual training and coaching programs, designed to inform, motivate, and thrill groups of every size.

A prolific author, Susan has written hundreds of articles, and twelve books, including *Meeting and Event Planning for Dummies, Riches in Niches: How to Make it BIG in a small Market,* and her latest book*, The Complete Idiot's Guide to Target Marketing.*

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Check out the Let's Talk Trade Shows website for
free and paid webinar education.

http://www.letstalktradeshows.com/webinars-2/

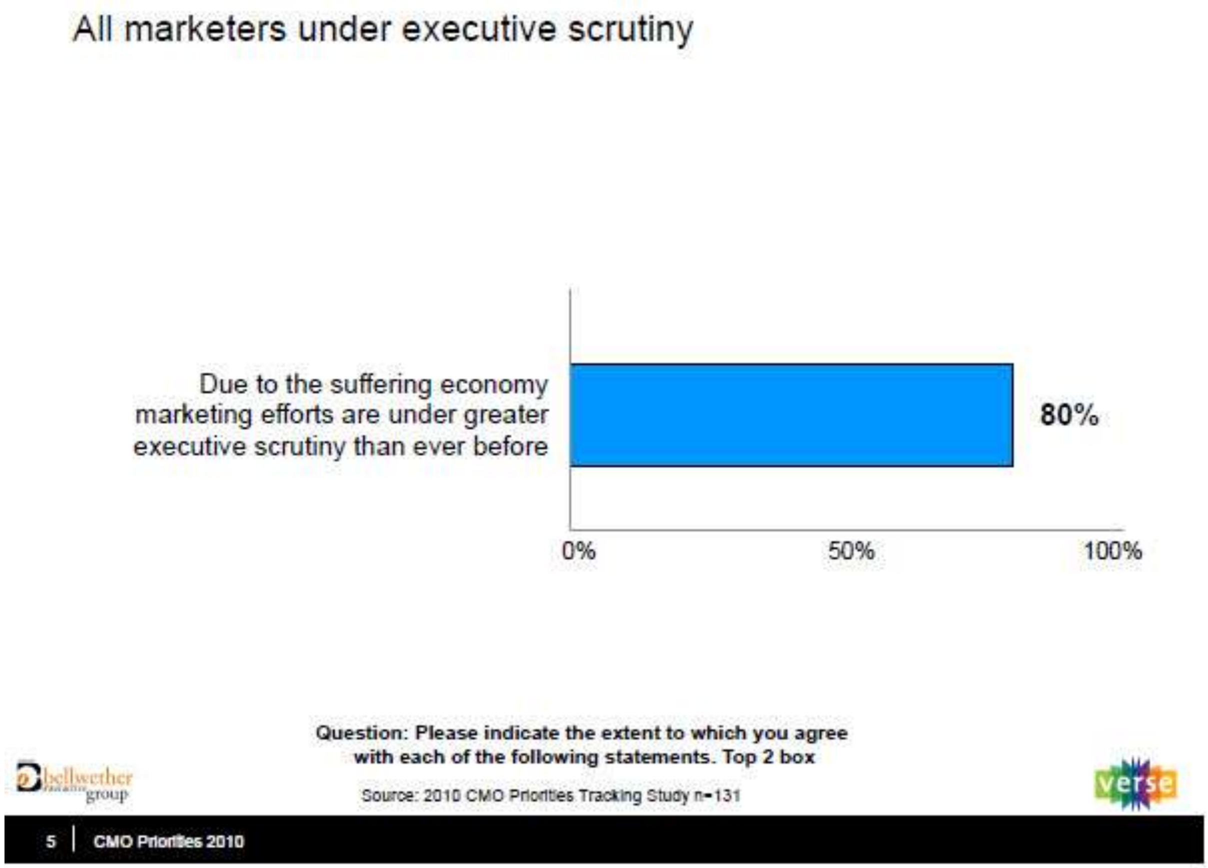
CHAPTER ELEVEN - CALCULATING THE SHOW'S RETURN

Now that the show is over, questions arise as to the impact of those marketing dollars. Was it a wise investment or money thrown down a drain?

In the old days when marketing money flowed easily, scrutiny over a trade show budget was non-existent. But now with a tight economy all marketing dollars are under the microscope. The marketing department is being asked to justify all expenditures.

CMO PRIORITIES FOR 2010

The Verse Group released a report this spring which is titled: *Rebuilding brands: a study of CMO priorities in 2010*. The objective of the report was to "understand how corporate CMOs are reinventing marketing in response to a fast changing economy." In the report, there are many significant findings. One finding dealt with executive inspection and the graph below shows the results.



In another finding from this report shows that achieving measurable ROI is in the top five priorities. In 2009, it was number one but has slipped to number four for 2010.

There is a new urgency to reinvigorate brands to achieve business goals

Top 5 CMO Priorities	2010 Rank	2009 Rank
Evolving our brand as the company's business strategy evolves	# 1	# 9
Preparing for an economic upturn	# 2	N/A
Refreshing our brand's image	# 3	# 8
Achieving measurable ROI on my marketing efforts	# 4	# 1
Developing marketing programs that integrate online and traditional media	# 5	# 2

Question: Looking ahead to 2010, which do you see as the top three priorities in your company's marketing efforts?

bellwether group

Source: 2010 CMO Priorities Tracking Study n=131

verse

10 | CMO Priorities 2010

The Benefits of Measuring Trade Show Results

Roger Lewis with Alliance Tech has written a White Paper titled, *Metrics are King! Event Justification in a Down Economy*. The following material has been taken from the White Paper as highlights and, it is recommended that you download the full copy for greater review. He writes:

> There are many benefits of measuring an event, such as determining customer satisfaction or validating the value of an event to vendors. However in a downturned economy, the bottom line is revenue.
>
> The essential or real value of event metrics therefore is twofold: 1) To demonstrate justification for an event based on its value to the organization, 2) To identify additional opportunities that can increase revenue.
>
> Justification is the first challenge. There are three areas of concern. How can I demonstrate that this event can deliver a measurable return on investment? How can I determine which event expenses give me the

most return on my expense? How do I prevent strategic events from being cut late in the year?

Gathering reliable data at your next event is the best way to generate results that justify the cost of similar events. It also arms you with the metrics you need to protect strategic events from being cut late in the year by identifying them as a business priority. The right metrics can deliver quantitative data that links an event to revenue.

What Can Be Measured?

"What can I measure?" has grown exponentially over the last five years. In the White Paper, Roger outlines the areas of measurement.

Event metrics generally fall into one of four categories: Attendee Satisfaction, Attendee Mind Share, Attendee Behavior, and Attendee Leads and Revenue Generation. These categories are considered key indicators of potential revenue and return on investment.

In the category of Attendee Behavior, Roger further defines this category by writing:

An attendee's consumption of an event can provide important business intelligence. Attendee consumption is the way an attendee utilizes an event. What sessions did he attend? Did he visit booths in the exhibit hall that related to the sessions he attended? What other event opportunities did he pursue? Attendee consumption of an event can be a valuable indicator of the depth of an attendee's interest in specific products or technologies.

Behavioral scientists tell us that interests and preferences in current behavior are indicators of future behavior. That's why behavioral analysis at events helps you to identify opportunities. The key behaviors reviewed at events are session preference and interest in product exhibits.

Below are the top five benefits of analyzing attendee consumption of events.
Attendee behavior…

1. Is the number one indicator of attendee buying intent.
2. Allows you to prioritize leads that you capture based on behavior.
3. Enables you to uncover opportunities to cultivate that were not captured as leads.
4. Assists you in identifying new trends to leverage in the marketplace.
5. Indicates ways to improve your next event.

Alliance Tech delivers RFID solutions to capture and analyze all attendee behaviors.

With RFID systems attendee consumption of the event can be analyzed quickly and transparently. Some business intelligence can be delivered to marketing and sales teams in real-time during the event via Web-based reports with easy-to-use dashboard interfaces. A complete evaluation of attendee consumption can be provided after the event that provides valuable intelligence about patterns, trends, and opportunities. It is also useful in determining how to structure the next event and what adjustments to make.

Most importantly though, RFID systems are integrated into an intelligent event solution that allows you to analyze and correlate data from multiple sources for better results. This enables you to quickly leverage all five benefits of analyzing attendee behavior, including indicating buying intent.

A Webinar on Event Metrics

Alliance Tech conducted a webinar on the topic of Event Metrics. This educational session entitled: "Measuring the Event," highlighted the development of a measurement plan, its effectiveness, and its integration with corporate objectives. Provided are some of the key elements discussed:

- **In today's economic climate – Metrics are King** – Don't leave home without a plan to measure your event. It's critical that you plan your measurement objectives well in advance of the event. Being able to accurately answer these types of questions will help you develop more efficient processes so you can further refine objectives.

    - Ask yourself how your event will contribute to your overall corporate initiatives.
    - Evaluate key objectives – event design, the time a visitor spends at your event and even your staff.
    - Consider adding behavioral metrics as one of your objectives.

- **Centralize your data** – Know as much as you can about your attendees. By creating a centralized repository for lead, survey and RFID data, you are able to easily correlate purchase intent with each attendee visit. The more you understand the customer and his or her needs, the more likely you are to fine tune your message for further targeting at your next event.
- **Data Integration** – Use a variety of methods to understand your customer. Lead retrieval, surveys and behavioral data help you measure ROO/ROI in order to determine purchase intent, sales pipeline and key message reaction. By capturing data from these three sources and then aggregating it, you are able to assess your

 # 2 Measuring social media impact—the proliferation of social networking platforms off the trade show floor is driving demand for access from the show floor. Technology solutions that provide exhibitors with access to attendees through Twitter, Facebook, and other platforms help exhibitors measure the impact of their social media activities and bring their online engagement full circle at the face-to-face event.

 # 3 Mining Booth Visitor Metrics—the post-recession economic climate is fueling the increased interest in attendee metrics. RFID technologies enable the collection of data from multiple on-site sources, which is analyzed to determine purchase intent and the probability for increased revenue.

 # 4 Measuring lead results using one lead retrieval solution—the complexity of determining which leads result from trade show participation when multiple marketing mediums are utilized, is motivating exhibitors to choose a single solution for lead retrieval. Web-based platforms that combine results from a variety of sources including email, telemarketing, social media, and direct mail, help event marketers integrate trade show metrics with other data points.

 # 5 Event to event metrics—the increased availability and lower costs of technology solutions are helping exhibitors address the difficulty of capturing and qualifying leads across multiple events. Solutions using RFID chips coupled with web-enabled lead capture devices, offer exhibitors effective and efficient ways to consistently capture and store attendee information in a single data base for analyzing program effectiveness from show to show and year to year.

EVENT MARKETING INSTITUTE MATERIAL: MEASURING EVENTS IN THE MARKETING MIX

The Event Marketing Institute has provided the industry one of their "snapshot" reports titled, *Measuring Events in the Marketing Mix.* The findings are as below:

EMI TOP 10 EXECUTIVE INSIGHTS

- Companies that measure and track attendance at events anticipate a 67% increase in their marketing budget allocations.
- Of all marketing elements tracked, 34% of respondents found event marketing gives the highest ROI, compared with the next closest, 24%, who cited Web advertising.
- When asked what they measure at events, 70% of respondents cited traffic, 67% looked at qualified leads, and 59% followed sales increases.
- The majority of companies (88%) that reported utilizing a lead-management system described their companies as "somewhat" or "highly" successful.
- The most responsibility for following up on sales leads falls to sales managers (41%), with marketing managers coming in second at 24%.
  The average closure cycle from event to contract signing was 3.8 months for 59% of respondents, with 11% closing the deal within an average of 3.2 weeks.
- By including both qualitative and quantitative returns, marketers can more easily compare and contrast the outcomes of various parts of the marketing mix against a wide range of metrics.
- External events are used most often within event marketing and, subsequently, command the lion's share of event budgets.
- With marketing investments under the microscope, it is critical for event marketers to establish a "chain of custody" for event leads.
- Marketing efforts can't take full credit for a sale without acknowledging the impact of in-person events.

They conclude their snapshot report by saying:

> That said, the issue of ROI has been debated for many years and more recently some have raised the argument supporting a new construct called return on objectives (ROO), saying the latter is a more appropriate framework for measurement. However, the ongoing debate is really one of semantics. Regardless of the label you attach to it, the end goal is essentially the same: establishing a yardstick by which to determine the performance of your event and the tools to drive decision and action based on that data.
>
> It all comes down to three big questions:
> - Did you achieve what you set out to do?
> - What hard data do you have to prove it?
> - What will you do with that data to improve your performance?

staff, any demos you are featuring and provide that much needed decision support information (planning, design of exhibit, level of investment justified, identify cost containment opportunities) as you plan and design future events.

- **Actionable Reporting** – Ask yourself: Does the data tie back to the objectives you've set? How do you want to use the data you have collected to modify future events? Reporting the data is a critical component of your plan and as you begin to manage the data you're measuring, you should ensure delivery of results are actionable and communicated accurately to the varying levels of internal stakeholders. For example, dashboards are great for event managers who want specific, tactical data. Scorecards and executive summaries are also an ideal way to support your objectives with senior management and other executives.

Once you collect event data, it can quickly and accurately be measured against your objectives and viewable in the format that's most appropriate to your audience. In keeping with what Peter Drucker said, measurement enables sound management and will ultimately lead you to continually improve your events, meet corporate objectives and develop strong relationships with customers by always meeting their needs. It's a win, win for everyone involved.

PUTTING MORE R IN YOUR ROI—TOP TRENDS IN TRADE SHOW MEASUREMENT

In preparation for a speech at TS2 which was held in Boston in July of 2010, Roger wrote the following bog post.

> A number of factors are driving measurement technology trends in the trade show industry. The green movement, economic recession, social networking, and the lower costs to provide technology solutions are at the top of the list. Exhibitors are at a critical juncture where event measurement and quantifiable justification are no longer "nice-to-have" luxuries. They are critical business imperatives. Here are the top five trends that are influencing the way that trade show managers and event marketers use technology to measure ROI.
>
> **# 1 Measuring savings by reducing your carbon footprint**—the green movement is a catalyst for moving the trade show industry to a paperless environment. Exhibitors play a role in increasing the demand for green solutions such as digital conference agendas, exhibitor directories, surveys, and evaluations. Show organizers are addressing the demand with mobile solutions and web portals that replace printed collateral.

You and your senior management must decide what information is necessary so you can collect and report it to them. Like the story of Mara Weber from Honeywell (below), it could take time to gain management's attention regarding a ROI framework.

THE F-R-E-E ROI TOOL KIT

In January of 2008, the ROI Tool Kit was unveiled at the PCMA annual meeting. The collaboration on this effort started with an IAEE Task Force Meeting in April 2006. At the same time, the Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR) had received a grant from the PCMA Education Foundation to develop an ROI Tool Kit, and it turned out that this initiative was a great collaboration between CEIR, PCMA, and IAEE. Key observations of the task force at the time included:

- ROI measurement is not suitable or worthwhile for many events, depending upon the objectives of participation.
- Simplicity is vital for any measurements developed.
- Many exhibitors and organizers are not at all interested in measuring ROI. Some may be reluctant to measure their ROI, for many reasons.
- Potential users of ROI should be identified across a spectrum that includes those highly likely to find ROI useful to those very unlikely to find value in ROI metrics.
- The "80%/20% Rule" applies to measuring the ROI of exhibitions and events, except the ratio may be closer to 95%/5%, with 95% being those who might benefit and/or need ROI measurement.

Taking this information and working with Skip Cox, whose team worked with the task force, the ROI Tool Kit was developed.

Now the industry has a tool which can be used in the planning process for exhibitors or at the end to determine the show's return. Skip Cox of Exhibit Surveys (www.exhibitsurveys.com) and I talked about this tool this week. He highlighted one aspect this tool has - "what if" scenarios - which are critical in the planning process. In fact, he believes the tool has more value in the planning process than in assessing a return.

By placing numbers into the Tool Kit, an exhibitor can assess the performance of a single show. The following graphics show the numbers of a 10 x 10 exhibitor at a technology show.

An exhibitor needs to place in the Tool Kit 14 different variables, shown below. The top one is normally obtained from the show organizer – net attendance. Exhibit Surveys definition of net attendance is "the total attendance to the show minus exhibitor personnel, press, students, show staff, family members and other ancillary attendees. In some cases you may choose to include exhibitor personnel (or a portion of them) if your company sells to other exhibiting companies <u>and</u> if exhibitor personnel (or a portion of them) have job titles/functions to whom you typically sell.

It is critical that you get accurate attendance figures from the show organizer or the calculators in this tool will produce unrealistic results. When requesting attendance figures ask for EEIAC third party audited attendance figures and request a copy of the full audit. If an audit is unavailable ask for "verified" attendance figures. Verified attendance figures exclude advance show registrants who did not attend the show. "No-shows" can be substantial for some shows and very few for others."

Each one of these variables has a definition if you are unsure of its meaning.

Post-Event Input		
Net Attendance *	3,758	
Target Audience *	45.00	%
Product/Service Interest *	40.00	%
Total Show Duration *	20	Hrs
# Visitors Handled Hourly/Staff *	7.00	
Occupied Exhibit Space *	150.00	Sq.Ft.
Total Inquiries Obtained *	200	
Qualified Leads Obtained *	100	
Exhibit Staff on Duty *	5	Avg.
Total Direct Exhibit Expense *	80,000.00	$
Total Staff Travel and Entertainment Expense *	20,000.00	$
Avg. Conversion % of Leads to Sales *	13.00	%
Company's Average Revenue/Order *	90,000.00	$
Company's Gross Margin *	40.00	%

Once that is complete, the Tool Kit calculates the return.

Potential Audience	676	
# Exhibit Staff Needed	5	**Avg.**
Open Exhibit Space Required	250	**Sq.Ft.**
Total Exhibit Space Required	400	**Sq.Ft.**
Reach Efficiency		
Inquiries Qualified	50	%
Potential Audience Reached	30	%
Cost / Qualified Lead	1000	$
Staff Performance		
Inquiries Per Exhibit Staff / Hour	2	
Estimated Total Inquiries with Recommended Exhibit Staff	200	
Potential ROI for Qualified Leads ++		
Cost / Potential Sale	7,692	$
Potential Sales Revenue	1,170,000	$
Gross Margin on Potential Revenue	468,000	$
Potential Revenue to Expense Ratio	12:1	
Potential ROI	368	%

++ Adapted from Cost and Results Metrics calculation, Trade Show and Event Marketing, Ruth P. Stevens, 2005.

For this particular exhibitor, they experience a 368% return – not bad!! In conversations with Skip Cox, CEO and President of Exhibit Surveys, an average return can be in the 10 – 13% range.

Please note that in the chapter on Industry Statistics, the *Oxford Economics* report highlighted that a return on investment for trade shows had a range of $4.00 – 5.99.

Webinar on the ROI Tool Kit

On the Let's Talk Trade Shows website there is a webinar I conducted with Skip Cox on the ROI Tool Kit. For those who are interested in using this to help evaluate your show's performance you can find it here.

A CASE STUDY OF THE ROI TOOL KIT IN ACTION

In January of 2009, the *Exhibitor Magazine* had an article about how an exhibitor used the ROI Tool Kit with their exhibit house to revamp the overall Exhibit program. Mara Weber of Honeywell's manager of trade shows and events for Honeywell Process Solutions and director of global Honeywell Users Group [HPS] is a manager we can admire. Provided is part of her wonderful story. [I have edited the article for this eBook. To obtain a full copy go to [*Exhibitor*]() and request a copy of: Honeywell's Smart Restart. There is a $5.00 fee for this reprint.]

> When Weber came on board in 2000, as a marketing staffer who helped primarily with HPS events such as road shows, roundtables, and HPS' user seminars, she was puzzled by the trade show program. "I really didn't feel there was a lot of strategy involved in decision making," Weber says. What's more, she identified a lot of wasteful and ineffective practices. She noticed that HPS' exhibits were often staffed by chatty employees who showed up late and ignored attendees. Furthermore, the company seemed to constantly reinvent its exhibit-marketing message, creating new signage and booth literature, and purchasing new booth components or entirely new custom booths for new shows in new industries. This strategy was hardly a cost-effective — or efficient — way of doing business. But the waste went deeper than just signage and exhibit structures. Weber found that the company's rationale for attending shows was often little more than "because we always have,"

without regard for changing attendee demographics or evolving exhibit-marketing goals. HPS also signed up for booth space without considering the program's objectives based on attendee profiles or ROI, and it rarely tracked leads. The leads that HPS did gather at shows were given to sales staff but there was no system in place for tracking them further. This made it impossible to determine whether or not any actual transactions resulted from HPS' presence at any of the shows it attended.

Weber knew she wouldn't be able to wave a magic wand and fix her program overnight. Most booth-space contracts for 2005 had already been signed, so making changes to her trade show calendar was out of the question. And even if she could make major changes, Weber wanted to make them based on cold, hard facts.

Mara and her exhibit house stared to gather data on her show schedule and target audience potential for a show. Here is an example of results the Pre-show module in the ROI Tool Kit regarding potential audience.

MARA TAKES ACTION

Her system was designed to count and qualify leads, track sales back to trade shows, and report ROI for each event. Implementing the process took time (especially for training staffers to follow leads through HPS' lengthy sales cycle) and money (lead-retrieval systems, more in-depth pre-show marketing efforts, etc.), but Weber is now seeing the payoff. Though HPS' numbers are still just beginning to roll in, early returns show a 71-percent increase in leads generated from late 2006 through early 2007. That data not only represents program-wide improvements, it also represents a baseline for her to use in an ongoing attempt to gauge the effectiveness of her program and the shows she chooses to attend.

In 2007, Weber again turned to exhibit house to help her develop and report goals. As a result of that partnership, Weber now develops a strategic show brief for every show HPS attends. She distributes the brief, which lists the company's measurable goals, to booth staffers so they are always aware of what the company hopes to achieve at each show.

Then, Weber circulates a quarterly report, reminding all internal stakeholders of the original goals for each show, and comparing them to the results her program achieved.
With systems now in place to set goals and report results for each show, Weber has made results part of the equation for every trade show and event decision HPS makes.

> To Weber, though, the biggest change is how management perceives the trade show and events program. "In the old days, our executives didn't spend a lot of time looking at the program," Weber says. "Today they do. Now they are asking questions about things like our ROI or attendees that they wouldn't have known to ask about in the past." In other words, as one All-Star Awards judge said, "Mara did one of the most difficult things to do in trade show marketing: Through her data-based approach, she changed the perception of the function of a trade show."
>
> From her humble beginnings as an HPS booth staffer, Weber has risen in her company's ranks and elevated the profile of the company's trade show program. It just goes to show, the view from the trenches can sometimes be the very best seat in the house.
> **By Brian Todd**

Ms. Weber is a hero!!

RETURN ON OBJECTIVES

Return on Objectives (ROO) is also measurable. Let's take a look at a couple of examples of ROO.

PRESS RELATIONS

One show objective might be the launch of a new product or service. Therefore the press relations and the press coverage can be measured. As an exhibitor you can assess the following:

Measurement of PR activity

- Calculate the number of reporters spoken to and interviews conducted
- Calculate the number of interviews conducted by your executives, either in print, TV or on the internet
- Track how many press kits distributed (hard copy and electronic)
- Calculate resulting coverage in:
  - print publications
  - online through websites, blogs
  - via Twitter and other social media tools
  - TV interviews
  - You might "weight" coverage received, e.g. premium vs. moderate

You can calculate your reach by using some or all of these tactics to determine if the launch was successful.

Hosted Meetings at an Event

Ed Jones, President of Constellation Communication says, "At an event you can go beyond what could be accomplished in the field sales call. You can provide customers and prospects with executive access or the correct specialists to talk and answer questions."

In fact, Ed works with his client's to determine the value of having hosted meetings at a show. Normally all the correct people are there, from senior management, specialized support engineers, etc. These individuals are not always accessible in a field sales call. The show is a way to leverage their expertise with current customers and selected prospects.

Over the years, I have encouraged exhibitors to plan for and host various meeting at the show. One exhibitor, Allen Reichard Corporate Director of AMD has used meetings very effectively as a justification of show attendance. At the annual CES show held in January in Las Vegas, he has as many as 400 meetings taking place with various levels of staff. By the way, Allen has been a client of Ed's over the years.

Ed uses the example of a chairman of a large company meeting with 30 customers over a 2 day period. He uses these numbers: $20,000 per trip x 30 customers = $600.000 in cost avoidance for a company. Now these numbers might seem high for a mid-size or small company. But they can be scaled down and appropriately fit your company figures. It is just another method of calculating a return on your exhibition investment.

Please note: the $20,000 figure Ed uses for a chairman's travel includes the normal executive staff that accompanies this person when they travel.

ROI and ROO can be attained for the show that you attend if they are planned correctly.

I hope this information in this eBook has been useful for your event marketing efforts. Please feel free to contact me with any questions. I can be reached at:

Check out the Let's Talk Trade Shows website for
free and paid webinar education.

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